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THE WILDER GENERATION

Jack Bechdolt

TIGER LOVE

Robert Terry Shannon

MUSICAL COMEDIES

Gilbert W. Gabriel

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Ten Others

He didn't use Listerine . . .



To escape a cold—rinse the hands with it

Millions of colds start when germs, transferred from the hands to food, enter the mouth. Therefore, before every meal, rinse your hands with Listerine. This effectually destroys disease germs. They are killed before they can enter the body. This simple act may save you a nasty siege with a cold. And it is especially important for mothers to remember when preparing baby's food.



**Don't let a Cold
or Sore Throat
become serious**

*—gargle with Listerine
full strength*

Kills germs in 15 seconds

SORE throat is a warning to look out for a cold—or worse.

If you have the slightest indication of trouble, immediately use Listerine, full strength, as a gargle.

Millions have found that this simple act checks the ordinary kind of sore throat promptly. Keeps it from becoming serious. Moreover, they have proved that its systematic use is excellent protection against having colds and sore throat at all.

When you realize that Listerine kills even the virulent B. Typhosus (typhoid) and M. Aureus (pus) germs in 15 seconds, you can understand why it is so effective against cold weather complaints which are caused by germs.

Though Listerine is powerful you may use it full strength with entire safety in any cavity of the body. The safe antiseptic indeed—unchanged during 47 years.

Keep a bottle handy in home and at work and use it—especially after exposure to cold weather or germ-carrying crowds in offices, railway trains, street cars or busses. It may spare you a trying and costly siege of illness. Lambert Pharmacal Company, St. Louis, Mo., U. S. A.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

By Fred A. Walker

Looking Backward

IN a Fifth Reader which I studied in a New Hampshire country school was a selection which began: "An aged man was standing at a window." I cannot remember any more of it verbatim, but the story told was of the appeal of the old man to a star to give him back his youth.

As a boy the story had a peculiar effect upon me. I felt a great and sorrowful sympathy for the man who sought the impossible.

There is one picture that we all paint—rich or poor, successes or failures. It is the portrait of "The Man I Might Have Been."

We look back over our lives and see where we might have planned more wisely, acted more discreetly, builded more substantially.

There never was a man who, if he could have lived his life a second time, would not have varied it in some way. Very likely the second living would not have been so free from regret as the first, but we are prone to think it would, because we flatter ourselves that we would have avoided the first's mistakes.

A tiny pebble will change the course of a great stream. There are little things in our youth that have profound effects upon our manhoods.

Who knows what would have happened to Abraham Lincoln if Mary Owens had not told him she could not marry him because he was "deficient in those little links which go to make up the chain of a woman's happiness?"

She meant that Lincoln in his awkwardness did not know how to make love after the fashion of the day.

But Lincoln was very fond of her, and many times, perhaps long years after she had refused him, he thought of "The Man I Might Have Been" had she married him.

You can imagine, too, that she must have thought sometimes of what would have been her history had she been the wife of the Great Emancipator.

The man you might have been, which you picture with greater or less regret, is only a fanciful being, perhaps less lovable, less capable of good, less fitted for your real tasks, than the man you are.

The man you are is a reality, and realities are the only things worth thinking much about. Regrets never built much of a success. You have to add right action to get a substantial and worthwhile result.

Do not waste your time or worry your mind about The Man I Might Have Been. Bend all your energies to the shaping of The Man You Are Going To Be. He is in the making. He will be a reality. He is worth while worrying about, if we should worry about anything.

Don't say "It is too late." It is never too late.

There is an excuse for everything but quitting. Just say over to yourself those two splendid lines that Henley was inspired to write:

I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.



The Wilder Generation

Jilted just before the wedding day, James McKay sought solitude in his forlorn love nest, but what he really found there— Well, look for yourself!

By Jack Bechdolt

CHAPTER I

DISILLUSIONED

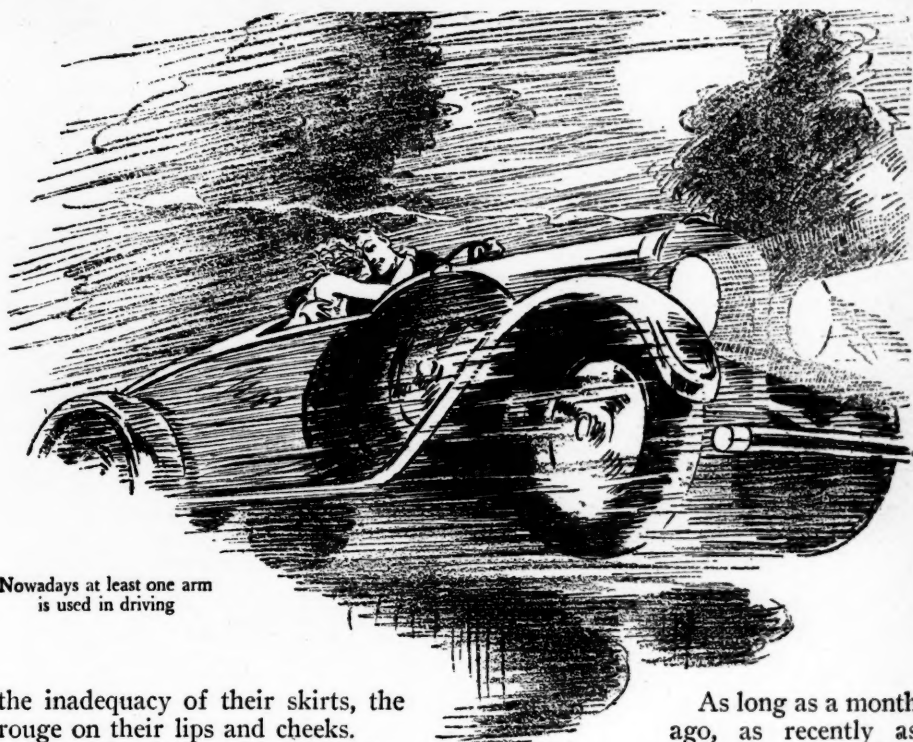


JILTED! That was an old-fashioned word, but James McKay was given to old-fashioned words and old-fashioned thoughts. He turned it over in his mind as he walked down Fifth Avenue on a bright, blowy afternoon.

Jilted!

A more modern generation might describe his plight as "getting the gate" or "getting the air" or being "taken for a ride."

Three very modern girls shoved him aside at the moment and strode past, laughing and deep in an argument. McKay resented the easy way they elbowed him without a look, the long, swinging stride of their slender legs,



Nowadays at least one arm
is used in driving

the inadequacy of their skirts, the rouge on their lips and cheeks.

He glared indignantly after them, and in his glare was something baffled and wondering, almost envious.

Nobody could take kids like that for a ride! Nobody could give them the gate or the air and get away with it. Nobody could hurt them as he was hurt this day and leave them bewildered and bleeding internally.

No, sir; they were hard—hard-boiled was the word.

James McKay was old-fashioned, but he was only twenty-seven years old, a sunburned young man in pin stripe brown, with good shoulders and chest, and long, active legs. His light brown hair was cut close and inclined to curl crisply about his head, with its steady blue eyes and wide, good-natured mouth.

He was young enough and good-looking enough for the trio he had cursed, all three, to glance back and appraise him with interest.

Jilted! This was to have been his wedding day and he had no bride.

As long as a month ago, as recently as two days ago, Mc-

Kay had prayed that this day should be fine. It would seem a good omen if Elsa and he started life together on a fine, blowy, bright day. He had fervently hoped it would be just such a day as this.

Well, it was a fine day, but what of it? He hadn't any bride, and there wasn't going to be any wedding. Elsa had made that plain enough.

McKay paused at the corner of Forty-Second Street and the avenue, deep in thought. What the devil did a man do when the woman he loved threw him over just before the wedding?

Get boiling drunk? He didn't want to do that; he didn't feel like that kind of fool.

Jump off a ferryboat or dock? Blow his brains out? Drink poison?

He lurched across the avenue at the thought. Visions of the East River were in mind. The water whose surface glistened so brightly in sun and

wind would welcome him—a dark, swift, strong flood that would bear him quickly into forgetfulness. The river for him—

The earth shook beneath his feet. The air split with a hideous wailing and the clatter of a big, brass gong. There was a confusion of shouting and amid it a shrill, piping whistle.

McKay was lifted suddenly by the collar of his coat, swung off his feet, hurled against the bronze upright of a traffic tower. The strong arm, clothed in blue with gilt braid, which had yanked him up, still hovered over him, fingers fast in the coat collar.

An indignant red face under a blue uniform cap glared at him. "Cripes! Jumping in front of a fire truck. You deaf and blind?"

McKay blinked rapidly. "Lord, I didn't see the damn thing."

"Oh, you didn't see the damn thing! I suppose you'll be saying you didn't hear the damn thing, either?"

"To tell the truth, I didn't."

The traffic whistle piped. A surge of pedestrians billowed onto the footways, two rolling waves, meeting and passing. The thick, red fingers released McKay's collar. But the red face lingered still, accusing him. "Must be a girl on your mind!"

McKay met the accusation bravely. "Right! She threw me down. But thanks for saving my life."

He turned into the eastward bound current.

A rich voice followed after him: "Hell, buddy, there's a million other girls."

"Not like Elsa!" McKay answered mentally. He loved Elsa Waverley. She was all he desired of a woman. She was beautiful, she had wonderful ideals—and so sensitive! If Elsa wouldn't marry him, what was there to expect of life?

Yet he reached the pavement, no longer thinking of the river. He had been too close to that death he had been thinking about. His skin prickled at

the memory. What he really wanted was solitude.

Here in New York was no place to think things out. At any turn he might meet some friend who knew of his intended marriage; somebody who would ask unwanted questions. Even now he kept his eyes on the curb, afraid of recognition. The thing for him to do was go some place.

Grand Central Terminal was just ahead, and, seeing it, he knew what he wanted.

There was his house on the Massachusetts coast. He had closed it himself two weeks ago when he came to town to marry Elsa. He had not meant to return for a month, not until after their honeymoon in Bermuda. Mrs. Wilkinson in the village acted as caretaker, but he could get in without letting even her know he was there. He could stay for days—weeks, if he liked—and be alone.

Better yet, work was awaiting him there, work in which he could lose himself, forget his troubles.

As junior partner of a law firm he had been intrusted with the Randall case, his first big responsibility. The papers were all in that house, ready for his attention.

McKay boarded a train. The lights of the tunnel began to slip past his window. Upper Harlem and the Bronx, then the brown fields and suburban half acres, went spinning by. McKay sat and stared, chin in hand, seeing not landscape, but a year of his life passing in review.

CHAPTER II

HIS IDEAL WOMAN



BEFORE Holly gave that party a year ago in his studio apartment near Washington Square, James McKay had devoted little time to women.

He was more than shy, he was afraid of them.

His parents had done a pretty good job with his education in South America, but they hadn't prepared their son for what he found when he returned to New York at twenty-one. The life he was familiar with, the society he had known at home, wasn't like this. Girls had changed, manners had changed, everything changed.

That strange, terrifying thing called the flapper was everywhere—youth with the painted sophistication of vice, given to a vocabulary that shocked him, and using it in voices that made his sensitive ear quiver. They smoked, they petted in public, they drank to excess. They boasted of knowing things he was ashamed to know.

McKay shunned them and devoted himself to his profession.

"If I can't find a sweet, old-fashioned girl, I'll never marry," he said.

He went to Holly's party late and silently protesting. Holly's young wife had insisted vigorously, and, because he was fond of his chum and indebted to Mrs. Holly, he sighed and resigned himself to another wasted evening.

He danced once dutifully with a girl whose face was a strange, dead white, whose mouth was a gash of scarlet paint—"looking like a corpse with a bloody mouth," McKay said to himself indignantly.

She was young, it seemed, younger than he would have supposed, but she told him a story he had already heard twice in Pullman smokers—heard under protest.

McKay dropped her with a haste almost indecent. He saw a dim alcove and sought refuge in it, only to discover three frankly affectionate couples whose murmured endearments made his ears burn. Finding an open door and a little balcony, he went out there, and, miraculously, was alone.

No, not alone. He had just lighted a cigarette when there was a feminine cough.

"Hello," said McKay gloomily.

"I'm not in the way?"

"Oh, not at all. I'm glad of company. Only it was close inside. I—I felt a little faint."

McKay offered cigarettes.

"No, thank you; I don't smoke."

Her voice had a deprecating way of fading out. She added, with a little laugh of apology: "I know I must seem like a back number. But you smoke, please. I love to see men smoke."

McKay started violently. He stared with all his surprised attention and discovered a woman, young and beautiful, with black hair that had been let grow and coiled in a knot at the nape of her neck.

She smiled at him. She had an enchanting smile that fluttered about her small mouth and wide, dark eyes.

"I'm afraid I need fresh air," she exclaimed. "Mrs. Holly would insist on my having a cocktail. I only sipped a little, but I'm not any good at that sort of thing. Even a tiny glass of wine sometimes makes me awfully silly. I guess I'm just hopelessly old-fashioned!"

"Thank God!" said McKay with an enthusiasm that made her inquire hurriedly: "I beg pardon?"

"I said thank God!"

"Did you really? Why?"

"Because I didn't believe there's such a thing as an old-fashioned girl left alive. And now that I've found one, I—why it's like finding Santa Claus again. This is great!"

"Silly boy!" She laughed gently and laid a little white hand on McKay's coat sleeve. Two hours longer they were on the balcony. His courtship of Elsa Waverley had begun.

Elsa had a small income of her own. She lived with her Aunt Winnie Spencer in an old-time brick house on West Twenty-Second Street in a neighborhood that remembered when Wanamaker's store was on Broadway at Chambers Street and still confused Fourteenth Street with way uptown.

"But you can't really *live* in the city," Elsa said. "I long for quiet, just a little white house beside a country road, with phlox and petunias and marigolds in a tangled, old-fashioned garden. I want room to breathe. I want the sky above me! I suppose that sounds awfully silly, doesn't it?"

"It sounds like heaven to me," McKay assured her, and meant it.

"But you see, I have to live in the city. I have my music, the violin. It's dreadfully hard. You've no idea how much it takes out of me! But I try not to think of that. I try to think of the pleasure I give to others. If one has a talent, one should use it to give pleasure to others, don't you think?"

"You're absolutely right," McKay declared with a ringing conviction. It was thrilling the way this girl turned to his masculine judgment for a verdict upon her conduct. And who understood her perplexity in this jazz-mad day better than James McKay?

"Too many selfish people. It's selfishness ails these modern girls," McKay expounded. "Self expression, they call it. I tell you they're wrecking the home, they're ruining the finest things about our civilization with their damned selfishness. I beg your pardon, I didn't mean to swear!"

Her hand pressed his arm, forgiving him. "Oh, please go on!" she said. "You've no idea how wonderful it is to meet one man who understands such a hopelessly out-of-date person as I am."

"Why, just to-day I was talking to a client of mine—I'm a lawyer. He hasn't seen his own daughter in six months. She hasn't lived at home for two years. Took a notion to go into business and won't live with her parents any longer. What's the home coming to when girls won't stay in it?"

"Oh, I'm so glad to find one person who thinks as I do!" Elsa agreed. "You've no idea how out of it I feel. How lonely."

That sort of thing had gone on for

almost a year. McKay called often, and then oftener at the house on Twenty-Second Street. He rejoiced at finding a girl with ideals and sentiment—a sweet, old-fashioned girl; modest, beautiful, given to the noblest deeds.

He considered Elsa an angel, and yet had the temerity to ask her to marry him. She consented—

Just two days ago, on the eve of their wedding, he learned the staggering news that it was not to be. In tears Elsa confessed she had to make her choice between a career and his love. She had been recommended for a violin scholarship abroad, so she gave him back his freedom.

Elsa followed James McKay to the door of the old parlor where this interview took place. She caught at his hands.

"Don't—don't hate me. Oh, you do! You hate me! My cruel, cruel James!"

McKay released himself by a forceful gesture. His brown face, usually so good-natured, looked grim and gray. He spoke with a rare restraint.

"Now, listen, Elsa; I don't hate you. But you promised to marry me—"

"And I meant to keep my promise, but—"

"You let me go ahead and plan our wedding. Why, it's just a couple of days till the day we—we were going to do it. You let me go ahead and arrange all my life and build my hopes and tell my friends and count on your promise. And then, at the last minute, because some fiddle teacher fills you up with a lot of hop about being a genius, and recommends you for a scholarship abroad, you break the whole thing up. You break off all our plans. You don't give a damn what happens to me. I'll bet you never thought once about me. Nothing matters because you think you've got a chance to be a concert violinist. Well—well, I'm going to try my damndest not to hate you for it. My very damndest. But if you

want my honest opinion right now, you can take your damn fiddle and go to—to Vienna with it. I'm cured."

The door was just behind him. McKay wrenched it wide, let himself out and slammed it. A moment later the front door of the house slammed and he marched down the brownstone steps, an erect, slender, broad-shouldered man stiff with indignation.

From behind an old-fashioned lace window curtain Elsa watched him go. For a moment her womanly sweetness deserted her. There was a spot of bright red in either cheek, and her eyes were narrowed and bright.

"Well," she said tartly. "Well!"

She turned across the drawing-room, her head high. She was biting her lips angrily.

"If that isn't just like a man!" she said.

CHAPTER III

THE STRICKEN BRIDEGROOM



HERE was a taxi at the station when McKay reached the end of his train ride. He didn't want a taxi. His house, a comfortable, all-year cottage, was two and a half miles from the little coast village, and he felt the need of a walk.

Besides, the taxi man knew him. Perhaps he had heard McKay was going to be married. He was sure to ask embarrassing questions.

McKay picked up his bag and hurried through a pretty lane onto a road that wound across the moorlands.

The day had the voluptuous regal warmth of Indian summer. The moorland vegetation was baked a golden brown. Sumac flamed scarlet, blue asters and golden-rod still ran riot, the laurel was turning, but the juniper and pine held their steadfast, rich green. Beyond that pattern, and framed by the granite ledges of gold and orange and chocolate, lay the purple sea.

"Sure," McKay said, his eyes roving this perfect beauty. "The place would look like this when it doesn't matter a damn to me how it looks."

The road he followed was familiar, uncomfortably familiar. Here was the little turn off to the rocks where he had parked his car not so long ago while he sat with Elsa's hand in his and planned their honeymoon. Those tire tracks in the soft earth probably were the ones they made on that gray, wild, blowy day.

There was the little crescent beach where they went for their swim every morning. There were the big rock they used to sit beside, and the footpath where there were blackberries and huckleberries.

McKay tried to pass it all without a glance, but failed. Never in his life had he seen a landscape that made him feel so miserable and lonely.

His house gleamed whitely through a grove of locust. James hastened his steps. He wanted to get inside, shut the door and bar the world out. The shutters would be up. The rooms would be dark and empty. He could wear old clothes or no clothes. He didn't even have to shave. He could do his own simple housekeeping, hide away and forget his troubles in work. He was glad he had the Randall case data there. That was intricate enough to keep him busy!

When he drew nearer, McKay found surprises. The shutters were open and the front door stood ajar. He stopped with a suspicious frown.

Nobody had any business in the place, not even Mrs. Wilkinson. It was his house, and when he closed it he expected it to stay closed until he ordered it opened.

His foot was on the step when Mrs. Wilkinson, the caretaker, came out of the front door to welcome him. A middle-aged, slender wisp of a plain-faced woman she was. Her spectacles gleamed, her eyes snapped with excitement.

"Well, Mr. McKay, I guess you're glad to get here! Your wife's here ahead of you. She's waiting inside."

"My wife?" said McKay.

He was aware that his lower jaw hung open. He must look like a fool, gaping at Mrs. Wilkinson. He closed his mouth hastily.

"Got here on the eleven ten, safe and sound," said Mrs. Wilkinson cheerily. "I think she's in the library."

"On the eleven ten?" McKay repeated. Mrs. Wilkinson didn't look crazy; maybe he had gone crazy.

"I received your wire at nine. Just had time to get Ed to drive me out and get the house open and aired."

"I—see. You received my wire, did you?"

James McKay was a promising attorney. He hoped to make a reputation as a brilliant trial lawyer. He held out his hand with splendid nonchalance.

"Oh, yes; the telegram. Got it with you?"

Mrs. Wilkinson had it in her apron pocket. McKay took the yellow slip and unfolded it without hurry. He read over the few words twice:

MRS SARAH WILKINSON
ANNISQUAM MASS

MY WIFE WILL ARRIVE ELEVEN TEN TRAIN
PLEASE OPEN HOUSE AND MAKE HER COM-
FORTABLE

JAMES MCKAY

The message had been filed from New York.

"Oh, yes," said McKay. "Oh—yes."

"Yes?" echoed Mrs. Wilkinson. She was beginning to look at him a little peculiarly.

"Ah—got here all right, did she?"

"Yes, indeed!" Mrs. Wilkinson smiled warmly, her eyes bright with the interest every woman takes in bride or groom. "She's a lovely young lady, Mr. McKay. I congratulate you, indeed I do. You have my very best wishes, mine and Ed's!"

"In the library, I think you said?"

"Yes, sir. I don't think she heard you come. I just happened to notice because I was looking out the window."

"Thank you, Mrs. Wilkinson. Awfully nice of you—all this." McKay waved vaguely about. "I think I'd better speak to my—to—to her, don't you?"

He moved toward his library, every nerve tightening. "Keep your head," he told himself. "No matter what this is, don't let 'em rush you off your feet!"

Mrs. Wilkinson stood watching him, smiling after him. "If I had any idea you'd bring her down here, I'd have brought a bag of rice and some old shoes," she said.

"Oh, yes—sure! Awfully nice of you, Mrs. Wilkinson—"

McKay's hand was on the library door. An absurd, wild conjecture made him slightly giddy. If Elsa had thought things over, if she had changed her mind—

Mrs. Wilkinson spoke again. "I took the liberty of ordering supplies, and I can stay on and get your meals. Of course you can't ask a bride to do any cookin', now can you? Ed can come get me in the flivver after supper, so you honeymooners can be as alone as you please—"

Mrs. Wilkinson got no farther.

A sound, sharp and sudden, turned them both to fixed attention. A shrill scream, a crash of something upsetting, the thud of a falling body. Then there was no further sound from behind that library door.

"Good God!" McKay said, and threw the door wide.

Close against a shelf beside the distant window he saw a light chair upset, its back broken. Beside the chair, as she had fallen, lay a young woman, one arm outflung. Near the nerveless fingers of her hand a book was flung open.

McKay ran to her. She lay motionless, eyes closed, her face pale except

where blood was trickling from a cut on the cheek. She was young, an astonishingly pretty girl in a jersey cloth dress. He had never seen her before in his life.

CHAPTER IV

"WHO THE DEVIL ARE YOU?"



McKAY stood gaping at the girl on the library rug. She lay with her pale face half averted from him. The long lashes were black against her white cheek, white except for a powdering of artificial pigment that looked fantastic now. Her lips were rouged, too, and were opened slightly with an expression of childlike surprise.

Who the devil was she? Where did she come from? And what did she mean by passing herself off as his wife? She must be the author of that telegram, James reflected quickly.

Mrs. Wilkinson pushed him aside. She bent over the slender figure, making a quick examination of her hurts.

"Go get some cold water," she snapped at the owner of the house. When he had brought water: "Go call Dr. Brauer. His number's nine seven, ring two. Tell him to hustle. Her head looks hurt bad."

McKay called the doctor and returned again.

"We can get her upstairs to bed, between us," Mrs. Wilkinson said. "I don't believe it's much but a knock on the head, Mr. McKay. Look, she's trying to open her eyes now!"

The black lashed lids were fluttering. They lifted, and lovely eyes looked at them without sign of recognition. Mrs. Wilkinson knelt beside her. "There, honey! There lamby, don't try to talk yet."

The girl didn't try to talk. Her eyes closed. She sighed deeply and was still.

"Honestly I wouldn't worry now," said Mrs. Wilkinson soothingly. "A

knock on the head isn't dangerous, always. Why, I dare say in no time at all she'll be as chipper as a sparrow. See, she was standin' on the chair, trying to reach that book off the top shelf. Must 've lost her balance. She's such an impetuous, busy little darling, isn't she?"

After a few seconds McKay realized the housekeeper was expecting an answer to this comment. He started and turned color.

"Oh, yes; awfully impetuous."

Well, that wasn't any lie. She certainly was impetuous, and she had a sweet nerve besides, masquerading as his wife.

Mrs. Wilkinson was watching him curiously. "Not like the young lady who visited you with her mother this summer. She was a little more staid like!"

"Oh, yes; quite so," McKay agreed.

Mrs. Wilkinson seemed to be wondering about Elsa. No doubt all the village knew or surmised that he expected to marry Elsa. He hesitated over an impulse to tell Mrs. Wilkinson the truth about the young woman lying at their feet. But he was a lawyer, and cautious. No need to jeopardize a possible interest by giving Mrs. Wilkinson food for gossip.

Instead, he created a diversion by picking up the outflung book that lay near the girl's hand. There might be a clew in a volume she desired so greatly that she had reached precariously to the top shelf for it.

The book was titled "The Conduct of Life," by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

McKay remembered it as one of a lot of books that were in the house when he bought it. He had put it away on the top shelf to make room for volumes of his own.

Emerson!

This girl risk her life to read Emerson?

McKay glanced at her wind-blown bob, her short skirts, the rouge that showed against a white face. He was

willing to bet she had never read a page of anything so quaintly mid-Victorian in her life.

"I think you'd better take her head," Mrs. Wilkinson advised. "Catch her under the arms, that's the way. We'll get her ready for Dr. Brauer."

McKay was surprised at the slightness of his burden. At the foot of the stairs, finding Mrs. Wilkinson's aid a hindrance, he caught the girl up in his arms.

"You go up and turn down a bed," he said, and started manfully up the stairs.

She was light, and felt delicate in his embrace, relaxed like a sleeping child. Her head stirred as it nestled against the breast of his coat. Her clothes and person smelled of some expensive perfume, faint but delicious. He glanced at the long black lashes brushing her cheek. She wasn't a half bad looking girl, and he didn't mind carrying her.

CHAPTER V

"I DON'T WANT HER!"



JAMES MCKAY sat on the top step of the stairs and waited for news. Dr. Brauer was in the room with the mysterious visitor. Mrs. Wilkinson bustled in and out, carrying basins of water, towels, a bandage roll. They were very busy between them, while the owner of the house was left out like a stepchild—

That little chit McKay had carried in his arms never risked her life for Emerson's essays! He thought of her wind-blown bobbed hair, her boyish figure, her rouge and powder and smartness—what were girls coming to?

They were bad enough with their outward appearance of sophistication, bad enough with their frank, foolish talk, but when it came to getting into a man's house on false pretenses—well,

by Heaven, that was going a step too far! McKay resolved to say some things to this young woman that would show her what one man thought about this generation.

Dr. Brauer came down the hall at last. McKay rose to face him and Mrs. Wilkinson. The village doctor was an old man, bald as a bean, with that curious waxy, transparent skin of the very old. He shook his shining head at McKay and smiled. He took the young lawyer by the arm and cleared his throat.

"She's conscious. Nasty contusion on the skull. She got that from striking her head when she fell. Otherwise, I don't see any serious injuries. I think rest and quiet—"

"She can talk, can she?" McKay interrupted.

"Yes, but—" The physician looked mysterious. "I must warn you, Mr. McKay, don't excite her."

"All right," McKay agreed hastily. "But I've got a few questions—"

"They can wait." The doctor's hand tightened on his arm. "There is a peculiar condition there, Mr. McKay. Due, no doubt, to the fall and the shock. Your wife is dazed. She is not capable of coherent thought."

"She can't answer questions?"

McKay, whose eager eyes were on the bedroom door, who panted to have a few words with the intruder and put her in her proper place, looked at two serious, sympathetic faces and two shaking heads.

"The poor lamb!" Mrs. Wilkinson sniffed. "So sweet and lovely in her little bed—and just like a child—helpless, like a baby!"

Dr. Brauer placed the finger tips of his two hands together and looked over his spectacles.

"I'm a general practitioner. I don't specialize in things like this. But my opinion is, this is merely the result of shock. Time will tell. In the meantime, rest and quiet are the best I can prescribe for your wife."

"My wife!" McKay groaned.
 "Damn it, doctor, she's not my wife!"

The look Dr. Brauer gave him was sharp and faintly disapproving.

"I understood from Mrs. Wilkinson—" he began.

That lady's plain face had flushed. Her eyes snapped and her mouth made a straight line. Disapproval exuded from every pore.

"I never saw this girl before in my life," the attorney protested vehemently. "I've been sitting around on pins and needles waiting for a chance to ask her who she is and what she's doing in my house?"

"That's out of the question," the doctor said quickly. "Her brain is fogged. It may be hours, it may take days, to clear up her memory. If the condition remains unaltered, I can give you the name of a good mental specialist in Boston—"

"I don't want any mental specialist, I want her out of here!" McKay cried. "She's not my wife. I haven't any wife. I don't want her here."

"That," Dr. Brauer retorted tartly, "is impossible. I don't care whose wife she is, she can't be moved."

McKay leaned weakly against the wall.

"That's a hell of a note!" he muttered.

"She can't be moved," Dr. Brauer repeated. He looked at a fat, old-fashioned gold watch. "I've got to hurry. Got a confinement. You telephone me about supper time and let me know how she's doing."

He picked up his bag and went down the stairs with an agility that did credit to his years.

When the front door closed, McKay



She relaxed like a sleeping child

glanced at his caretaker. Mrs. Wilkinson's gleaming eyes pinned him to the wall like twin rapiers. She was boiling with curiosity and suspicions. There was no escaping her.

"Come downstairs where we can talk and not disturb her," McKay suggested, leading the way to a sitting room. There he sat down, but Mrs. Wilkinson remained standing.

"Look here," he began, weakly belligerent. "What do you know about this affair?"

The woman shook her head. "I don't think I'd begin that way, Mr. McKay. If there's any explainin', it had better come from you."

James flushed. "Mrs. Wilkinson, if you're trying to accuse me of anything—"

It was the woman's turn to flush. "I'm not accusin' anybody, but I've got this to say: I don't have to stay in this house. If there's anything funny goin' on here, I want to know it. I've been raised strict, and I'm a decent,

married woman."

"Oh, Lord; you would think of that!"

"Well, I'm waitin', Mr. McKay. I'm just as ready as the next one to take folks for what they call themselves. And I try not to think the worst of anybody. But when it comes to a young woman arrivin' here as your wife, then you boldly declare she ain't your wife and you don't want to keep her around, it's time we understood each other."

"Well, she isn't my wife, Mrs. Wilkinson." McKay rose, feeling the disadvantage of his chair.

"Ed and I heard you was gettin' married?"

"Well, I didn't. That's off. I'm not married, and I don't intend to be."

"H-m," said Mrs. Wilkinson, and obviously thought over the possibilities of this admission.

"Last summer you saw the young lady I intended to marry—Miss Waverley."

"I did. And she was a nice young lady. A very particular and strict young lady, I should say." Mrs. Wilkinson's glance accused him of nameless deeds.

"Let me tell you now, we didn't call off the marriage for the reason you think we did. I'm not that kind," McKay answered angrily.

"Then who is this young woman upstairs?"

"Who is she? That's what I'm asking you. I never saw her before."

"Well, you sent me a telegram she was comin'."

"I did not. I never saw that telegram till you showed it to me." Mrs. Wilkinson didn't believe him: "That's the truth," James protested.

"Funny you couldn't say so when you got here."

"A lot of things are funny, but that's the truth."

Still, she didn't believe him. McKay walked about the room and thought over his plight. If Mrs. Wilkinson

left, he would be in a mess. Not only would she spread gossip all over the village—news of his jilting and news of the mysterious young woman under his roof—but she would leave him utterly without help and with a helpless stranger to care for.

"Well, look here, Mrs. Wilkinson. Believe anything you like about me, I don't care. But there's that girl upstairs. You heard Dr. Brauer say she couldn't be moved. I'm not fit to take care of her! Lord, how can I nurse her? Think of it, that poor little thing lying there so helpless and innocent—"

"Oh, I'm not so sure about that! Innocent! First thing she asked for was a drink. 'My God, what a head!' she says. 'Anybody got some gin?'"

"Said that, did she?"

"She certainly did."

McKay frowned angrily at the carpet. Yes, such a girl would say something like that.

"Well, suppose she did? She's human. She's a woman in trouble. Injured, maybe dying. You call yourself a Christian, don't you? You're not going to desert her?"

Mrs. Wilkinson looked doubtful, without replying.

"You heard Dr. Brauer say she's got to have quiet until she comes out of this mental daze. Lord, suppose she finds herself alone here, without proper care? The shock might kill her!"

"Well, I'll stay," the caretaker conceded at last. "I'll stay till Ed comes out with the car. Then I'll talk it over with him. I guess I'd better go back up and see if she needs anything."

"That's the idea!" McKay applauded, beaming with relief. "And let's not judge the girl until we know. She may be perfectly all right and—anyhow—she's somebody's daughter, now isn't she, Mrs. Wilkinson? Poor little kid!"

He was a good lawyer. Some day he would make a first-rate trial lawyer, with the magic gift of melting obdurate juries. Mrs. Wilkinson nodded,

her glance softening.

"I guess I'd better run right up to the poor lamb," she agreed.

A few moments later she called down. Her voice held its former note of grim disapproval. "Mr. McKay, she says for Heaven's sake have you got a cigarette she can have?"

CHAPTER VI

"OF COURSE YOU'LL STAY!"



McKAY ran up the stairs, cigarette case in hand. If she were able to smoke, she couldn't be so badly off. If she were recovering maybe she could answer a few pertinent questions that crowded his mind uncomfortably. It was about time this young woman gave an account of herself.

The invalid was propped up comfortably with pillows. She lay in McKay's big four-poster bed and looked little and lost in it. A neat bandage had been fastened around her head. When McKay came in she was busy with a comb and hand mirror, arranging the disheveled bob.

Her hair was a deep bronze. Its little waves glistened like polished metal. The rouge had been washed off her face, revealing skin clear and lovely with a creamy tint.

She had a face any man would turn to look after—sensitive, intelligent, beautiful. Her soft lips were grave, yet they had a knowing, humorous quirk about them.

The girl glanced up at McKay from eyes the color of the October sea, purple, mysterious eyes. She smiled uncertainly.

"You brought cigarettes! You darling!"

Her voice was deep-toned, with a fascinating whisper of hoarseness in it.

McKay handed her a cigarette and lighted it. He didn't mind women smoking so much as he objected to the casual assurance with which she ac-

cepted the small favor. Damn it, this person was a stranger—an intruder besides—but she acted exactly as if everything were understood and all right!

The invalid leaned back against the pillows with a deep sigh of satisfaction. Twin curls of smoke came from her delicate nostrils.

"That helps," she said, and turned the purple eyes his way, smiling.

Mrs. Wilkinson stood by the door, watching. The grim New Englander was beginning to look skeptical again. McKay fancied that both of her Puritanical ears were cocked forward attentively, anxious not to miss a syllable. Evidently she was going to have a lot to talk about during the long winter evenings.

McKay turned on the caretaker. "Will you please make up the front bedroom for me, Mrs. Wilkinson? I'll have to sleep some place for a night or two. I'll call you if she needs anything."

Mrs. Wilkinson hesitated, looking displeased. She went with a flounce and left the bedroom door ajar. McKay rose and closed it after her.

When he turned back, the purple eyes were thanking him with a warmth that thrilled. A hand beckoned his chair closer. The voice whispered: "Who is she? She gives me the fidgets."

"Mrs. Wilkinson, my housekeeper," McKay said coldly. "A very kind, fine woman."

"And who are you?"

McKay stared rebukingly. "I'm James McKay. You ought to know that. You passed yourself off as my wife."

Her handsome eyes widened, then narrowed. A sharp line came between two delicately traced brows. She met his accusing look steadily, puzzling over his answer. Finally she shook her head.

"Your wife? I passed myself as your wife? Why in Heaven's name

would I do that?"

"Yes, why?" McKay echoed. "I'm asking you!"

"I passed myself as your wife! I don't believe it!"

McKay handed her the telegram. "Do you mean to say you never sent this?"

The girl looked at it with interest, but shook her head.

"Somebody sent this telegram, I didn't," McKay argued. "It must have been you. At least you arrived here soon afterward and told Mrs. Wilkinson you were Mrs. McKay."

"Why, that's ridiculous! That's outrageous! Where is your wife? Let me talk to her."

"I haven't any wife. I'm not married."

"You're not!"

He was watching her closely. For a moment he detected a startled interest in her look, a keener, more personal appraisal that his news must have evoked.

"I'm not married," McKay repeated. "I don't expect to be, now. But a few days ago I expected to be. News about it was in the papers. I come down here looking for peace and quiet and I find a woman I never saw before, passing as my wife. Well, it occurs to me that she might have seen the newspapers and planned to take advantage of that news to get into my house for some reason. Don't you think maybe it would be a good idea if you cut out the play acting and tell me the whole story?"

"I'm not play acting!" The bronze head started to shake a vigorous negative. She groaned and put a hand to her temple. "I forgot. That doctor told me not to move suddenly."

She looked white and shaken and suffering. McKay forgot his indignation.

"You're ill. Maybe I'd better go—"

"Don't go!"

Her small hand shot out and caught at his, gripping it with desperate

strength. The movement bared her arm to the shoulder. It was a lovely arm, slender and graceful. There was a ring of desperate urgency in her voice. She smiled up at him, anxiously, wheedling.

"Be a good fellow, stay around. I get scared alone—this is all so queer! Lying here in your bed—it is your bed, I suppose?—being in this house. That woman, Mrs. Wilkinson, who looks at me as if I'd done murder or something! Don't go away and leave me!"

A feverish flush had come into her cheeks. She was dangerously excited.

"I can't stand it," she exclaimed, starting up in bed. "How did I get here? What am I doing here? Who am I?"

Her hands snatched wildly at the covers. She was trying to leap out of bed. McKay caught her shoulders and forced her back, gentle in his firmness.

"There, take it easy," he cautioned. "Dr. Brauer says you've got to take it easy. Don't worry about all that stuff. You're all right. You haven't done anything criminal—"

"How do I know? How do I know I haven't done something awful?"

"Listen," McKay argued hurriedly. "You never did anything to be ashamed of. Why, Lord, I can see that just by looking at you. You've been a little ill, that's all. Every year you read about cases like yours in the papers. Girls that study too hard, or get worried about something. And on top of that you had a bad fall and hurt your head. A few hours' rest and you'll remember who you are and all about it. You'll be laughing at all this mix-up!"

Hours later, when the excitement of the moment had worn off, McKay realized that he had answered the very questions he had meant to make her answer. He had given himself the reassurance he meant to demand of her.

His legal mind was trained to investigate and suspect, but his legal mind was not functioning at the moment. He

was too shocked and excited to remember that he was a lawyer.

A semidelirious young woman was trying to leap out of his bed. His busy hands were trying to keep the covers decently about the loveliest bare shoulders he had ever seen. His face was very close to the most beautiful purple eyes and soft, startled lips he had ever seen. He didn't have any time to remember that he was a lawyer.

"Here, here," he said anxiously, "have a glass of water. Have another smoke. Just lie back and take things easy."

He administered the water and lighted a cigarette. She accepted both.

"I'll try to behave myself," she promised contritely. "But this thing gets my goat. Why am I here? Who am I? I can't stay here. I won't stay in this house!"

She was up again, fighting against his anxious hands.

"I can't impose on your kindness. I won't. I won't do it. Find my clothes. I'm going away from here!"

"You are not!" McKay cried indignantly. "Think I'd turn you out in your condition? You lie back now and take it easy. Just rest. You're safe and well cared for, and Dr. Brauer will fix everything. Why, I want you to stay. You're my guest. Of course you're going to stay, you poor little devil, of course you'll stay!"

He pressed her back against the pillows. She ceased to struggle, lying quiet and gazing up at him with shining eyes of indescribable purplish blue. She looked so small and helpless that McKay's heart was wrung.

"You poor little dear, it's perfectly all right!"

"You're good, Jimmy. You're so good to me." She caught at him, and her small hands drew him closer. Her thrilling, low-pitched voice with its plaintive, whispering overtones informed him: "You're good. Anybody can see that. Good all through, you darling."

Was she offering a kiss? McKay was too shocked to reason about it. Her lips were near and tempting. She looked so childlike and innocently expectant that there was just one thing a big, strong, good man like himself could reasonably do. He kissed her enthusiastically. When he stopped for breath her hoarse voice cried: "Oh, Jimmy!"

At that particular moment Mrs. Wilkinson opened the door and watched the kiss with avid, disapproving interest. It ended sooner than James would have wished. Reflected in the mirror of the near-by dresser, he saw Mrs. Wilkinson's grim, granite face. He turned, flushed and surprised.

"I'd like to speak with you, Mr. McKay," said his housekeeper. "Providin' you can find a minute to spare."

Left alone, the invalid recovered her discarded cigarette. She inhaled deeply, winked one eye at the ceiling and remarked to the listening room: "That ought to start something."

CHAPTER VII

MRS. GRUNDY



MRS. WILKINSON led her employer to the head of the stairs. There she faced him, striving for a dignified, ladylike calm. McKay knew at once that no good would come of the interview.

"I've made up the bedroom," said Mrs. Wilkinson. "The house has been swept out and the groceries are in the ice box and cupboard. There's five gallons of kerosene and some more in the oil stove, and there's a fire laid in the sitting room. The linen's all fresh and put away. When Balson's grocery calls to-morrow, you'd better order a pound of butter and two pounds of bacon, because you're getting low—"

"Mrs. Wilkinson, what are you getting at?"

"Mr. McKay, I'm leavin' here, now."

The attorney tried to draw himself up with all the dignity of a righteous man, bitterly misunderstood, but his housekeeper responded: "No use your lookin' at me that way. I'm goin'."

"Going? You're going to desert me. Leave me with an ill, possibly dying woman on my hands?"

Mrs. Wilkinson sniffed sharply. "I guess she ain't exactly *dying*!"

"I don't know why you say that."

"My eyes ain't so bad. I saw you two just now."

McKay felt the extreme disadvantage of burning ears. A sort of prickly heat broke out all over him. But he kept his dignity.

"Nonsense, the girl's delirious, that's all. I had the devil of a time quieting her."

"So it would seem," said the elderly woman.

"I tell you, she's out of her head! She's hysterical. Just because she grabbed me and kissed me—a delirious patient—out of her head—"

"I notice she wasn't so out of her head she forgot your name! 'Oh, Jimmy!'" Mrs. Wilkinson uttered a short, sharp sniff to point the quotation. "And I notice you wasn't so out of your head you didn't kiss her right back, either! Well, I don't pretend to judge your affairs. They don't interest me. I don't pretend to judge anybody. But I don't have to work for you either. It was an accommodation. And I don't choose to work for you any more. Here's the keys to your house, Mr. McKay."

She handed him the ring of keys and went on down the stairs and out the door.

McKay followed slowly. He stood in the door and watched her sturdy figure trudging the path through the moors, headed for home in the village. After Mrs. Wilkinson had vanished, he sat on the front step and smoked one cigarette after another without reaching any hopeful conclusions.

The afternoon shadows were draw-

ing out long and thin when McKay succeeded in reaching Dr. Brauer by telephone. "She seems to be doing pretty well," he reported. "Says her head doesn't hurt any more, but she can't remember anything yet."

"That's all right," the doctor assured him. "Very encouraging. Just see that she has rest and quiet, no worries. Don't press her with questions. I dare say a good, sound night's sleep—"

"Listen, doctor! I'm all alone out here. Mrs. Wilkinson has gone home. I want you to send me a trained nurse."

"My dear sir"—Dr. Brauer's voice was tired and rather crisp—"there's just one trained nurse within twenty miles, and I'm using her on a serious case."

"Well, send me somebody—a woman who can run things out here."

"I'm sorry, Mr. McKay, I'm not an employment bureau, I'm a physician."

"Good Lord!" McKay was warm with his grievance. "Nobody seems to care a damn if I'm stranded out here. Can't you realize I'm all alone?"

Dr. Brauer became even crisper. "To-morrow I'll see what I can do. To-night I'm a damned busy man. And right now I'm needed on a serious case. Good-bye."

The telephone clicked his dismissal. McKay stared at it resentfully. "Serious case!" he groaned. "I'd like to know what in hell he calls this?"

McKay went sadly toward the kitchen. He was hungry and, of course, the girl upstairs had to be fed. He had no gift for cooking, and well he knew it, but what to do? He broke eggs into a skillet, lighted the oil stove, set the skillet over the flame and wandered disconsolately to the ice box. He stared at its contents without enthusiasm.

"A sweet wedding day this turned out to be!" he muttered.

A light step, crossing the kitchen hurriedly, startled him to attention. The invalid was up and dressed. She still wore the bandage about her head:

her face was pallid still. But she moved toward the oil stove with swift purpose and snatched the smoking eggs off the burner.

"You didn't put any butter with these!" she exclaimed. "Can't that sniffy woman, Mrs. What's-her-name, cook?"

"She went."

"What for?" The purple eyes turned anxiously on him.

"She didn't approve of us. She found out you're not my wife; that I never saw you before. Then when she saw us kissing—"

"So that's where you've been ever since? Just sitting down here stewing about your lost reputation, I suppose!"

McKay grew indignant.

"Well, look here, did you have to call me Jimmy? Funny thing, come to think of it, you lost your memory, but you didn't forget my name!"

She looked on him coldly.

"You told me your name. If, in a foolish burst of gratitude, I happened to use it, I apologize. I promise not to do that again."

The mysterious sea-purple eyes met McKay's indignantly. Then the slight figure swayed. Her hand went to her head. McKay sprang to her side anxiously, his arm about her shoulders. For a moment she seemed about to collapse against him.

"I'll go away," she exclaimed breathlessly. "I'll never bother you again. Only—only, I'm so damned hungry! I haven't eaten since lunch yesterday noon, and the sight of all this food—I'll go away if you'll just give me a slice of bread and butter!"

"You'll go right back to bed," McKay cried, horror-stricken. "Dr. Brauer says you're not to stir out of here. Come on, I'll carry you up—"

"No! No, I can't bear that. I can't bear lying in that strange room, all alone. Let me stay here. I can cook. Let me get supper for both of us!"

Her pleading was piteous. Poor little thing, she must be terrified, all alone

upstairs in a house strange and empty. McKay compromised with his conscience.

"You sit down and promise not to move," he said. "And you can tell me just what to do and we'll have supper in no time!"

CHAPTER VIII

RETURN OF A BRIDE



McKAY had to light lamps before he set the table. They were cottage oil lamps, and cast an intimate, warm and limited illumination which made the old kitchen seem very cozy.

The owner of the house had doffed his coat and vest and wore a large apron tied about him. His pretty charge, exhibiting strange docility, remained in a comfortable rocker, busying her hands with preparing a salad while she surveyed his activities.

Directed by her, potatoes had a magic way of browning prettily, coffee was steaming, bacon and eggs sputtered in the skillet, and order came out of chaos. Cooking was not so bad under these circumstances.

"There's one thing," said McKay. "What am I going to call you? Can't you remember any name at all?"

She shook her head roguishly.

"Christen me any name you think suitable. It isn't every day a man gets a chance to name a full-grown girl. I'm curious to hear what you think I look like."

McKay frowned over the problem. He discarded one name after another, brightened finally and declared: "You look exactly like Joyce to me. That's it. Joyce just fits you."

She started uncertainly from her chair, her hands clasped. The queer sea-purple eyes stared at him in amazement.

"How did you know that?"

"Know what? Why, you don't mean to say Joyce is your name?"

Her head nodded triumphantly. "It is! I knew it the moment you said it. I am Joyce."

McKay saw she was trembling violently and made her sit down.

"That's darn funny," he marveled, awe-struck. "Maybe it's just coincidence. Maybe it's what-do-you-call-it, some sort of effect of your subconscious on my imagination. Well, anyhow, it's a darn funny thing. Joyce! It certainly fits you. Joyce! Joyce—what?"

She frowned, concentrating her attention. She shook her head.

"It doesn't matter," McKay assured her cheerily. "We're making progress, Joyce."

She watched him carrying dishes to the table, trying to fold a napkin prettily; fussing over a vase of purple and blue asters he had collected from the dooryard. Her eyes grew soft and shining. She seemed to find James McKay amusing, but it was an affectionate amusement.

Their meal was set on the kitchen table at Joyce's suggestion. Warmth of the stove and their activities had made the kitchen by far the most homelike room in the house.

Joyce ate with an appetite that bore out her assertion of semistarvation. The color came back into her cheeks. She leaned back at last, cigarette in hand, a second cup of coffee before her.

"I'm glad that woman left," she declared. "I didn't like her. I suppose she's told the whole town about us by now?"

"Damn her!" McKay groaned.

Joyce considered him, her look amused. "Poor Jimmy, not a shred of reputation left!"

"That's not so darn funny! As a matter of fact, I'm a lawyer, and building up a good practice. Mrs. Wilkinson's story won't help me any."

Joyce laughed. "That's a lot of air, Jimmy! Loss of a little dignity never hurt a man yet. It doesn't bother a girl

any more. So long as we both know we're O. K.—"

"Well, it wouldn't have been so darn funny if I had brought my wife here and found you. I pretty nearly did. It happens this is the day I was to be married!"

Through long black lashes her eyes studied him quickly, speculating on his emotions. She spoke cheerfully.

"My dear Jimmy, if you'd brought a wife along, depend on it I wouldn't be here. She would have got me out of this house hours ago. She would, wouldn't she?"

McKay thought of Elsa Waverley. "Yes, I guess she would. I'd like to know how she would have managed it!"

The musical tootle of a motor horn before the house brought them both to their feet. Somebody was knocking at the front door.

James gave a startled look. "Maybe it's Mrs. Wilkinson, relenting. Maybe it's Dr. Brauer with a nurse. I'll go see."

The front door burst open before McKay reached it, lamp in hand. Joyce, left alone in the kitchen, heard his startled exclamation: "Why, Elsa!"

She heard the visitor's rejoinder: "James! Oh—my dear, you're safe? You're all right, James?"

McKay gaped at the girl who had almost become his wife, holding the lamp aloft like another Statue of Liberty. The yellow light fell on Elsa's anxious, uplifted face, her wide, dark eyes, her tremulous lips.

Elsa wore a close-fitting, little, dark hat, with a dark blue, romantic cape about her simple, dove-gray dress. Her shapely hands fluttered. One of them touched McKay's coat sleeve.

"My dear—oh, my dear. You're safe!"

"Sure, I am. Why—Elsa, what in the world—is something wrong at home, Elsa?"

"I had to come, James." Elsa touched her breast with the fluttering

hand. "I was so worried lest you—lest—I felt that you needed me, James. You *are* all right?"

McKay frowned at her, astonished.

"You mean you came all the way from New York because you were worried about me?"

"Yes, James. I tried to find you everywhere. Then I remembered this place. My heart told me you were here, all alone in our little house. I thought, perhaps I can do something; perhaps if I am just beside him, near him, I— Well, I thought I can make it a little easier for him. I can help him through!"

"You came alone?"

"Not exactly. I brought auntie's maid, Louise. I suppose that was old-fashioned, wasn't it? You'll let me in, won't you, James? Shan't we sit down and talk? Poor James, so tired and white!"

The human Statue of Liberty lowered his lamp at last.

"This is awfully nice of you, Elsa." He spoke hastily, confusedly. "Darn nice to—to think of me to-day. You were always thoughtful, Elsa—"

"James! I have some heart, I hope."

McKay struggled for mastery of the situation.

"Just leave Louise in the car awhile. Come in here, Elsa."

He led the way toward a front room.

Elsa exclaimed: "But you were in the kitchen! We saw the light. Let's go there."

"The kitchen's a mess. I was cooking. This is better—"

"I smell coffee, James. I want some. We'll have coffee beside the stove and be warm and cozy."

McKay hurriedly put forth an arm to stop her, but Elsa disregarded the gesture. He shrugged, admitting defeat. After all, Elsa had come to console him, and it was pretty sweet of Elsa to want to stand by him through this dark hour. She would have to meet Joyce sooner or later.

Joyce had been close beside the

kitchen door, an eager listener. She had just time to slip back to her seat at the table and pick up a fresh cigarette.

In the doorway Elsa stopped, opened her lips in soundless astonishment, then froze slowly to an icy rigidity.

"Oh?"

She turned inquiring eyes on the man she had almost married.

Joyce smiled at them both. "Introduce us, won't you, Jimmy, dear?"

"Elsa, this is Joyce," McKay exclaimed hurriedly. "This is Joyce—we don't know her last name, yet."

"Oh?" said Elsa, shivering slightly. "Well, I'm sure it doesn't matter, James. Not in the least."

She moved away from the kitchen, biting her lips. McKay, lamp in hand, turned after her.

"Elsa! You mustn't think—"

Elsa went straight through the hall toward the front door, the man following. At the door she stopped to say coldly: "Of course I didn't realize— Well, it seems you had no difficulty finding consolation—"

McKay interrupted swiftly. "Don't say that, Elsa. Don't think it, either. When you understand, you'll—"

"Thank you, James. I think I understand quite well. And I'm sorry—sorry I was foolish enough to put my trust in you!"

With that she went out into the night, straight to the waiting car. At a word from her the car turned itself about and departed. McKay remained at the door, lamp in hand, watching her go.

CHAPTER IX

ONE WOMAN'S OPINION



O that's the lady you were going to marry!"

McKay wheeled about. Joyce had trailed him to the hall. She smiled mockingly. "I'll bet you told her she was an angel—and believed it!"



"Oh!" said Elsa, shivering slightly. "I'm sure it doesn't matter."

"I can't see that it's any of your damn business," McKay retorted.

Her smile softened. "Poor Jimmy! Nobody likes to be taken for a ride by any woman—or man, either. Come on back and smoke with me and I promise not to say anything catty about her—if I can help it." Joyce glared into the dark night beyond the open door. "That's the one kind of girl that gets me mad," she muttered.

McKay, bearing his lamp, turned on her stiffly.

"It's unfortunate that we don't always think alike. She happens to be the kind of girl I admire very highly. She happens to have a few of the good, old-fashioned womanly qualities you don't find among many girls to-day."

"A few!" Joyce exclaimed. "She's got 'em all. You're right, there aren't so many of her kind around. And it's a good thing for everybody there aren't."

McKay set his lamp down on the kitchen table. He was so indignant his hands were shaking.

"I happen to be just old-fashioned enough to prefer a sweet, womanly woman with ideals, to the gin-drinking young self-expressionists with their

smoking room stories," he declared.

Joyce shook her head at him, her smile gentle.

"Jimmy, sit down. You're an old dear, and I didn't mean for a minute to be catty about your girl friend. Only she's the kind that makes me sore. Why, nobody could be so near perfection all the time as she thinks she is. Nobody! Coming down here all a ditter about her poor precious James! I heard what she said, every word of it. And I'll tell you why she came. It wasn't enough she socked you good and plenty, refusing to marry you. She had to come back and gloat over her victim. She thought she'd find you with a broken heart. She thought she could play the angel of mercy. Yes, and I'll bet she hoped she could keep you dangling on, even after she socked you, because that kind of girl has got to have admiration all the time. It's a habit with them, and it's a lot worse than gin or dope, when it gets them."

Joyce's eyes were hard and bright. "Womanly woman!" she scoffed.

"It's a hopeful sign for civilization that kind went out of fashion along with hoopskirts and stays!"

Joyce leaned across the table to lay

her soft hand over McKay's. "I'm through. I won't say another word. But honestly, wouldn't you like to tell a pal all about it, Jimmy? Get the story off your chest and you'll feel a lot better."

"I couldn't think of discussing it. It's a very personal matter," McKay declared stiffly. But he was human. After five minutes of sympathetic encouragement he began at the beginning. He made a thorough job of housecleaning in his aching heart.

When McKay had finished, Joyce had no comment to offer. Considering her recent volubility on the subject of Elsa, that seemed strange to him. She only pressed his hand and shook her head. Then she left the table, wandered off to the kitchen window and stood looking into the night.

McKay sat smoking gloomily. He felt like a criminal, telling a strange woman his plaint about Elsa, but he felt a lot better, too.

"Gracious!" Joyce exclaimed. "It's past nine o'clock. We haven't done the dishes."

"I'll do 'em," McKay rose hurriedly. "Time you went to bed. You're an invalid."

"I'm not that kind of skunk," Joyce declared. "You can stack and wipe. Lucky I left water on the stove."

They did the dishes between them amicably.

"I'm going to bed now," Joyce told him. "I've stood about all my head's good for. See you in the morning, Jimmy."

McKay went with her as far as the foot of the stairs. He watched her start up, apprehensive of her strength. Halfway up she paused, her lamp lighting a mocking face.

"Don't think too hard of us, darling. Maybe girls have borrowed a few vices from their brothers, but they've learned a few virtues, too. And they haven't changed any, underneath. Some of us are still cats like your Elsa and some aren't so bad. Fashions in

women don't change."

"I don't give a hang whether they do or don't," McKay declared. "I'm through with 'em."

"All right, good night, Jimmy."

"Good night, Joyce."

The clock in the hall struck ten as she disappeared beyond the stairs. Only two hours more remained of his unhappy wedding day.

McKay went into the library and found an old pipe. He got out the papers in the Randall divorce case and spread them on the table. But it was a long time before he lost himself in the intricacies of that pending suit.

A lot of disturbing things had been happening; one of the most disturbing was this girl who had walked into his house out of nowhere. Who was Joyce? How long was she going to be on his hands? What the devil could he do to get rid of her?

And yet he wasn't so sure that he did want to get rid of her. For all her annoying ways she said things that made him think.

His wedding day had gone to join all the other vanished days in the calendar. It was nearly two o'clock in the morning when McKay blinked his eyes, emerged from the welter of the Randall case and gathered up his papers.

He locked the Randall notes in the steel filing cabinet that stood near the mantel, lighted a hand lamp and went quietly up to bed in his front room.

The house was silent. The mysterious victim of amnesia no doubt was asleep. He hoped to get a few hours' sleep himself. But three o'clock struck, then half past, and he was still awake, lying staring at blackness, wondering if Elsa were what the other girl said she was and, if Joyce were right, who and what was Joyce!

McKay sat up abruptly, forgetting both Elsa and Joyce. That sound, twice repeated, was nothing native to the night. It came from below stairs, in the direction of his library window. It

came again, a rasp of wood and the sudden, sharp snap of metal.

McKay swung himself out of bed without a sound. His hand reached for clothing. His slippers had felt soles and he went down the stairs noiselessly.

The house was dark and quiet again. He had picked up a small flash light and ran its flickering beam about the familiar rooms. The library windows were all closed, but he found one unlocked, and knew he had locked it.

He raised the sash and examined it inside and out. The black paint had been scratched, the wood had been gouged by some sharp instrument. McKay was very much awake, and in perfect possession of all his sharpened faculties.

Somebody had tried to get into the house by the library window. The noise he heard must have been the pushing back of the old-style window lock. The thin blade of a knife, slipped between the sashes, would have done that!

The sharp snap had been more than the intruder reckoned on. He might be out there in the dark right now, lying low. Soon he might venture back!

McKay sat down on the floor, his back against the wall beside the window.

He was ready for whatever might come in.

CHAPTER X

AN INSIDE JOB



THE night developed a stealthy noise. McKay's alert ears distinguished it from the normal sounds in the trees, the chirping of crickets, the faint creaks and sighs of cooling timbers. This sound was inside the house.

Somebody was moving very softly.

A footstep whispered on the stairs, the library door creaked faintly as it opened wider.

Somebody was in the room!

McKay tensed his muscles and waited. It had been a long wait, a wait that seemed endless, but at last it promised to lead to something.

His eyes were used to the blackness, so widely opened that he could distinguish the dim silhouette of something blacker moving in the dark. It crossed the room and paused beside the mantel.

A circle of light sprang from such a flash light as he was carrying. The beam played over the gray steel face of his own filing cabinet, but what McKay noticed, and what chained his attention, was the identity of the intruder.

The light reflected faintly on the face of Joyce!

Her eyes were intent upon the cabinet. She pulled open one of its sectional cases gently and began to examine the neatly docketed contents.

McKay rose silently, tiptoeing closer. He flashed his light suddenly, directly into her eyes.

"Stand perfectly still," he said sharply. "You'll get hurt if you don't."

The flash light dropped from Joyce's hand. She drew herself upright, and her hands rose. The light was in her eyes. She couldn't see McKay, but his words and voice suggested that he was armed.

"Keep your hands in the air." McKay moved closer. "Got a pistol?"

"I have not!"

He felt over her clothing. She told the truth.

"Very well, stay there."

McKay moved toward the library table, feeling behind him to guide himself, keeping the light on Joyce. The lamp was there, and matches. He got its wick started, put the chimney over it.

Joyce stood still as he had directed, her eyes watching him. She was fully dressed. She had drawn on her small hat over the bandaged head. Her face was white and expressionless.

"Now," McKay commanded, "you

can explain what it is I own that you're so keen on stealing. And don't try to tell me you can't remember!"

Joyce caught her lower lip between her teeth. Her purplish blue eyes had grown big. She was scared for once, and McKay was savagely glad of it.

"So that's your racket!" he exclaimed bitterly. "You came down here to steal something. You faked that telegram in order to enter this house. You got caught, and you faked your fall and your amnesia and all the rest of it. You lied to me right along. It's about what I might expect of one of you bright, clever, modern girls!"

He extended one hand as he spoke. "We'll just have a look at that stuff. Let's see what you're so anxious to get away with."

Joyce sprang suddenly toward the library window, which stood open as McKay had left it. He had only the flicker of her glance toward the window to warn him, but was quick enough to swing her back.

She struck at him viciously. McKay seized her hands and held them together. Joyce writhed in his grip for a moment. Then she stood still, her face close to his, breathing stormily.

"You can ask questions till you're blue in the face," she pouted. "Go ahead, ask! Ask yourself hoarse, you won't find out anything from me."

"I think I will," McKay promised. "If I don't, a day or two in jail on a robbery charge may make you think it over."

"Jimmy! You can't do that!"

McKay was about to retort heatedly that he could and would, and she needn't expect any special consideration at his hands. He was diverted from this rejoinder.

"Joyce!"

The shout came from outside the house. A man's voice. Joyce turned her head toward the window, her eyes wide, her expression startled and unbelieving.

McKay turned, too.

As he did so a rock came through the open window. It was well aimed. It caught the lamp on the library table and shattered its glass bowl. There was a wild, sputtering flame, then darkness in the room. Jimmy held firmly to the girl.

Somebody came in through the window with a rush. Joyce struggled against the attorney's hands and was suddenly free.

McKay turned to meet the intruder, just in time. A fist caught him in the face. He swung wildly, then closed in, his arms gripping the other. He was dealing with a man, and a powerful fellow. They wrestled unsteadily, crashing into a chair, slamming against the table, back again across the room, trying to crush and trip and break each other.

A light flickered over them. Joyce had found one of the flash lights and was using it.

McKay, his head buried against his opponent's chest, caught sight of his widespread feet. The man had braced himself. He was catching McKay off the floor.

That chance beam of light turned the tables. McKay brought down his full weight on the other's toes. His foot was slipped, but there was weight enough behind that jump to crush sensitive toes.

The grip relaxed. McKay tore himself free enough to raise a savage knee that caught the other amidships and sent him staggering.

As he went back the unknown gasped: "Joyce! Sock him!"

Something collided with the back of McKay's head. He saw a brilliant burst of flames. He felt himself plunging through a universe crisscrossed by blazing comets and spinning dizzily into a void where there were utter blackness and silence.

James pitched forward, scraping the library table in his fall. He lay inert, half under the table. Joyce dropped

the little horsehair-covered footstool that had done such deadly work. She flashed her light over the fallen man, then knelt beside him to investigate his hurt.

She looked up presently. "He won't bother us for a few minutes. I hadn't any idea a footstool could do so much damage."

Then she rose and flashed the beam over the disheveled man who watched her. She addressed him bitterly.

"Well, I thought you were going to stay safe in New York! It's about time you found the nerve to do your own dirty work."

CHAPTER XI

"I KNOW WHO YOU ARE!"



LYING under the library table, half conscious, wholly confused and miserable, James McKay heard scraps of conversation between a man and a woman. They were arguing.

"You've got them," the woman said. "Go ahead and get out of here. This isn't a healthy spot for you."

Her voice was deep with a curious whispering hoarseness that seemed to remind McKay of something, but just what he could not remember.

The man said: "Well, good Heaven, Joyce, you can't stay here!"

"Who says I can't? I've been here all day. And I've had to lie like a trooper to do it—but I stuck!"

"But what's the big idea? You came for the letters, didn't you? Well, we've got them. Why stay behind?"

The girl answered reproachfully: "It just happens I was the one who hit Jimmy. And he's all alone in this house, except for me. If you think I'm going to run off and leave him here injured, maybe dying, you're all wet! Maybe I've killed him, I don't know! I won't go until I find out—I won't, I tell you, and that's final!"

There came a blessed interval after

that, an interval when McKay was not conscious of existing. His eyes opened at last to the gray light of early morning. He was lying on the couch in his library. His head ached like the devil.

Something heavenly cool was laid across his throbbing brow. It was a hand towel filled with cracked ice. The next time the towel was changed, he blinked his eyes at Joyce and tried to struggle upright.

Joyce bent over him, slipped an arm under his shoulder and helped him gently upward on pillows.

"Now swallow this," she directed. "It's aspirin, and it'll ease the throbbing. I know. They gave it to me yesterday."

McKay blinked owlishly at her, his comforting towel hanging askew like a drunken laurel wreath.

"Haven't you done enough?" he inquired coldly. "I thought you'd be gone by now."

"Jimmy, don't be bitter!" Joyce looked at him gravely.

"Bitter!" McKay shouted and regretted it. The effort of raising his voice gave him a terrifying twinge of pain. He mumbled the next. It didn't hurt so much if he mumbled. "I'm beyond being bitter. I'm just curious. What did you forget? What is there in my poor, unworthy house you came back to collect?"

"I didn't come back," Joyce said with more spirit. "I stayed right here to nurse you."

He stared at her, remembering the snatches of talk heard while he lay under the table.

"But I'll go now," Joyce promised sadly. "Of course I've risked my neck, sticking around to make sure you were safe and not dying—or anything. But that's O. K. I'm not looking for gratitude."

Regardless of pain, McKay sat bolt upright.

"Gratitude?" he quavered. "Do you realize what you've done to me? You come here and blacken my reputation

by saying you're my wife. When Elsa comes back to me and maybe I might have been reconciled, you break that up. I couldn't explain you to Elsa in a thousand years. Then, on top of that you rob my safe and crock me with a club or a stove lid or something—"

"It was not. It was a footstool!"

"It felt like a ten-ton safe! And after all that—after all you've done—you expect gratitude besides. I told you what I thought of you modern girls last night, but since I've got to know one, what I used to think isn't an echo alongside what I think now. Of all the insolence—Oh Lord, my head!"

Joyce gently pushed him back on the pillows. She picked up the ice pack which had fallen off during his oration. Her capable, cool hands touched his fevered cheeks anxiously.

Presently she spoke. "A lot of what you say about me is true. I did come here to steal something, but it wasn't your property. It belongs to somebody else, and your having it wouldn't do you any good. It wouldn't do anybody any good. It was something that should have been destroyed. Well, I destroyed it."

"You destroyed a lot more'n that," McKay said darkly. "You destroyed my faith in women—all kinds."

"I lied to get into your house," Joyce went on. "I read in the paper you were going to be married. That you were going to Bermuda on a honeymoon. I sent the telegram signed with your name to Mrs. Wilkinson because I knew she had keys to the house. I passed myself as your bride. Then just as I was getting what I was after, you had to come along!"

"What a shame!" McKay mumbled with what he hoped was irony.

"Yes, it was. I had to do something quick, something that would keep me under your roof till I got my work done. I pulled a book off the top shelf and toppled off the chair and it's a wonder I didn't fracture my skull! Then I faked amnesia."

"I know all that now," McKay agreed. "But why? You had a reason. You stole something. Are you going to tell me or aren't you?"

"I told you that what I stole doesn't matter. You haven't lost by it. Nobody has gained by it—except an innocent woman. And you'll find out what it was soon enough. As for me, I'm satisfied you won't die. I'm going. Good-by."

"Wait!"

McKay swung himself off the couch in his excitement. "You're not going, now. I know you. I know all about you and why you came here!"

Joyce was staring at him; McKay was staring at her. Joyce's hand fluttered to her lips. She was uncertain now, half fascinated by surprise and fear.

"It came to me," McKay announced. "Last night, when you asked me to give you a name, and I said Joyce. That seemed funny, didn't it? I remember why I gave you that name. I saw a picture of you once, a picture taken when you were eight years old. Joyce! Sure, you look a little like that Joyce now! And now I'll tell you the rest of your name. You're Joyce Randall, and I know all about you!"

CHAPTER XII

WILD AND WILLFUL

"YOU don't know anything about me that I'm ashamed of," Joyce Randall retorted. She eyed the man who denounced her with a challenge in her look. "I suppose you heard all the lowdown on me from my father?"

"I did," McKay said grimly. He held the ice pack to his throbbing temples and glared at her.

"Well, go on, what did he say?"

"He said you'd got so modern you hadn't any respect for your own parents any more; that you wouldn't even live at home for the last two years."

"He was right," Joyce replied calmly. "Lots of children lose respect for their parents. If their parents don't like that, why don't they earn a little respect? It's the only way to get it. Five years I listened to my father and mother carrying on a bitter enmity. Five years of quarrels and recriminations and humiliating bitterness! I saw I was losing my own self-respect by living with them, and I left. I got a good job and I pay for my own home. Why not? Lots of girls do it successfully."

"There used to be a time when children had some love for their fathers and mothers," McKay said. "But you smart, modern girls—"

Joyce interrupted. "Be careful! I love my father and mother. Yes, I do! I love them, but I can't stand seeing them make each other miserable—and me miserable."

"Your father has begged you to return home. You refused. You had your own precious career to look after."

"And so I had," said Joyce. "And why not? I've got only one life to live. And as for returning home, as you happen to know, my father right now is starting a suit for divorce from my mother. And what kind of a loving home or permanent home is that to return to? Would *you* return to it if you were in my place?"

McKay thought it over.

"Probably not," he responded cautiously.

"Of course you wouldn't! Now listen to me. I can see where you get your ideas. My father no doubt has told you all his troubles, including his idea of a wild, willful daughter who ran away and wouldn't come home. And I'll bet he blamed the whole thing on my mother—and me!"

McKay looked guilty and kept a silence that was worse than assent.

"Aren't men the limit! And yet I don't blame him so much. He's had provocation. And as for me, I sup-

pose you thought I was just a little devil with horns and hoofs and a reek of sulphur. I was just the epitome of wild youth to you, wasn't I?"

Her hearer nodded slowly.

"And you needn't think you've changed my opinion by what you did to me," he added.

Joyce shrugged.

"Oh, that! I didn't do anything serious, except the footstool. And I'm awfully sorry for that, Jimmy dear. Honest! How's your head now?"

"It's rotten. What else?"

"You listen to me," Joyce said earnestly. "See if you can't forget you're my father's lawyer and look at the other side of this story. You've accused my generation of a lot of things, you and my father and my mother. You listen to my holler for a minute."

"In the first place, my parents haven't got on together for five years. It's grown worse every year. I don't say who's to blame, both of 'em for that matter. The only thing they did agree on was that I was a disgrace to the family. Maybe I was. They were a disgrace to me, too!

"My father made a lot of money, and, having idle time on his hands, went with other women. My mother got even with him by running around with another man. And I happen to know there wasn't anything to that except the damn-fool, sentimental idiocy of a woman who thought she was neglected by her husband.

"Both of them have the nerve to accuse us young folks of wildness! They say we're the bad lot. Lost all decency and self-respect! That's what they say, and people like you say, and all the time they were *doing* what they *accused* us of!"

It was a long speech, and Joyce was so earnest about it that her cheeks were flaming. She was breathless with the effort. McKay thought she looked magnificent as she faced him with glowing eyes. Then he remembered something.

"Now I know what you came here for! Those letters your mother wrote to Henry Cadman! You stole those letters, evidence in your father's suit! You know you did!"

"I did," Joyce said calmly. "It's too late to fuss about them now. They're gone. I burned them there in the hearth."

"And just what good do you think that will do?"

"Jimmy, listen!" Joyce leaned across the back of a chair, her pretty face deadly earnest. "Mamma's been a fool. She was neglected. She got to feeling sorry for herself. She met this man, Cadman. I guess she likes him, though he gives me a pain in the neck. Anyhow, there was a sentimental attachment between them, and mamma just thought she was paying papa back for everything. It never went any farther than letters; trust mamma for that!"

"Then papa got wise and hired a detective to steal the letters. That fat-head, Cadman, would keep them, of course! Well, mamma was in a jam, and she came to me for help. And I love her, in spite of her idiocy. I love them both. There was just one thing to do. I came down here and stole the letters."

"And now papa can't go ahead with his divorce suit," Joyce added exultantly, "because the rest of his evidence doesn't amount to a darn!"

The strange child of a wild generation leaned across the chair back. She had knelt upon the chair to do it, and the attitude made her seem very young, almost like a little girl. Her smile was triumphant.

McKay shook his head—gently, lest it start throbbing again.

"I'm awfully sorry, Joyce. Honest I am. You had a good idea and you did your best. But, unfortunately, the suit isn't ended. Not even with the letters burned. Being a careful lawyer, I took the precaution to have photostat copies made of every one, and

they're locked up where you can't get hold of them."

CHAPTER XIII

UNINVITED GUESTS



HE smile faded from Joyce Randall's face.

She got off the chair thoughtfully and stood in front of McKay, staring at him.

"You see, it isn't any use, Joyce. You destroyed the original letters, but the photostat copies, supported by affidavits, are just as good evidence before the court."

"Does papa know you've got copies?"

McKay guessed her drift.

"Now see here, Joyce. That won't get you anywhere. Your father is my client; I'm his attorney. I'm not going to lose the copies to oblige you or anybody else! I'm not that kind of lawyer."

Joyce sat down on the couch beside him. She laid her hand on his and talked rapidly and earnestly.

"Jimmy, listen! All those letters will do is make three people miserable. Papa doesn't want a divorce. He's just acting like a spoiled child, that's all. Mamma will be disgraced, and, Lord knows, she's suffered enough since Cadman told her the letters were stolen. Think of it, a man and woman who loved each other, who coasted along through marriage for twenty-three years! They struggled along when papa wasn't rich or even comfortably off. They worked together. They were happy. They could be happy again if they'd forget this silly business—and I could be happy, too!"

"No use, Joyce, dear. A decent lawyer can't do that!"

"But it wouldn't be wrong. It's right!"

"I can't do it!"

McKay caught her hand between his own. She would have snatched it away

angrily, but he gripped her fingers harder.

"Get this straight, Joyce. I've got a job to live up to. I'm your father's lawyer, and I can't do anything like that."

Suddenly her hands were free, her arm was about his shoulder. She rubbed a soft cheek against his, and her voice caressed him. "Jimmy—to make me happy?"

"No."

"Jimmy, you don't hate me. I think—you love me a little?"

"I love you a lot!" McKay groaned. The words were involuntary, but second thought made him nod. "Yes, I do. God knows why! It's all wrong. You've brought nothing but trouble. And—and I ought to love Elsa. I'm a dog even to think of you—"

Joyce laughed. "Jimmy, you darling!"

"Damn it all, I adore you!"

"Then you will!"

McKay freed himself of her embrace.

"I will not," he said quietly. "No."

She sprang up. She was angry.

"All right, go to the devil! I hate you! I hate you!" She was near tears. She turned and stamped across the room. She kicked a chair that stood in her way. "My God, how I hate a man as smug as you are!"

"I can't help it," McKay said drearily. "I—almost wish I could. But I was born this way."

"God pity you," Joyce retorted. "Well, I can't waste my young life here. I'm going."

"You're going to walk to town?"

"Certainly. I need a walk, a long one."

She went out of the room without another glance at him. McKay put his aching head between his hands. Until this moment he hadn't known what misery was! Lord, Lord, he loved her—and she hated him!

The house was deadly still and empty, so empty that it was pain to

think of it. Outside the early sun was flooding a clean, newly washed world. A beam of yellow light stole into the disordered library where two chairs lay overturned, where a pile of broken glass and a mess of oil and soot told of the broken lamp.

McKay rose slowly and painfully, stumbling over a footstool. It was the weapon she had struck him down with. He looked at it, shook his head and sighed. How could he ever bear a quiet life again?

The master of the house limped stiffly to the front door and leaned in the doorway, looking on the bright, empty world. Then it was not empty. A large touring car came into sight around a bend of the unpaved road. It came bounding toward him, flashing in the early sunlight.

He watched its coming in a daze of misery, and saw that it carried three passengers besides the chauffeur. Then it came up his own driveway.

One of the passengers was Joyce! She was the first out of the car. As McKay limped down the steps, she waved at the others.

"My mother, Mr. McKay. I think you and papa are acquainted?"

Peter Randall nodded at his lawyer without enthusiasm. He dismounted from the front seat—a massive, gray-haired man with a red face, grown somewhat portly but handsome and willful still.

"Come inside, McKay," he said, jerking his head meaningly at the impassive chauffeur.

McKay helped Mrs. Randall out. At her best she must have looked much younger than her actual years, due to a good beauty specialist. She was not at her best just now. What art had done to baffle age only added to the present dejection of her appearance.

Joyce was explaining with an assumption of casualness meant for the chauffeur's ears: "Fancy my meeting them! Isn't this a piece of luck, Jimmy?"

"It's a surprise," McKay agreed. "You'll all have breakfast with me, of course!"

Peter Randall snorted and strode on into the house. The others followed.

"You must excuse the looks of this room," McKay said of his library. "There's been a lot of excitement around here lately."

"You can drop that, now, McKay," Peter Randall growled. "We won't strain ourselves being polite. I understand my daughter's spent the night here. Well, I must say, McKay, I gave you credit for having a few principles. So far, I've trusted you, but if this is the way you pay back my confidence, I tell you it's a dirty trick!"

Mrs. Randall broke in, her voice strained and fluttering: "I'm sure I haven't had the pleasure of Mr. McKay's acquaintance, and maybe everything is perfectly proper. I don't want to judge anybody before I know the facts. But I guess Mr. McKay can appreciate a mother's feelings when he knows what I've been through. We were roused out of bed in the early morning by a long distance call from a very dear friend—"

"He isn't a friend! He's a human louse!" said Peter Randall bitterly.

"Mr. Cadman—a very dear friend of mine," the wife retorted. "Anyway, I'm sure Mr. McKay isn't interested in our opinions of Mr. Cadman. The point is, we were told Joyce was here—and under peculiar circumstances. And I must say, Mr. McKay, I think you owe her parents an explanation, at least!"

"Yes, and, by Heaven, I want it now," Peter Randall added.

McKay sprang to his feet. He didn't care if his head split or not. He was mad, and his mouth opened to tell them so. Joyce stopped him.

"Jimmy, shut up," said the child of trouble. "I'll do the explaining. I could have explained half an hour ago when I met you if it hadn't been for Eddy. And you might as well have

talked it over in front of him. I'll bet what he thinks is plenty. Now you both listen to me."

Joyce shook her head at her parents. "This entire family owes Jimmy McKay the humblest apology it's capable of. For one, I make mine right now." She turned to McKay with shining eyes. "Jimmy, I've been rotten to you. We've all been rotten. I'm sorry."

McKay caught her hand. "Then you don't hate me?"

"I love you. And I don't care who knows it—"

"Good God!" her father groaned. "Worse than I expected."

"Really, Joyce!" her mother gasped. Joyce turned to McKay.

"Jimmy, this is going to be a family row. You've had enough rows for awhile. You run along and put some more cracked ice on your poor head. I'll call you when papa and mamma have come to their senses and are ready to apologize for all the trouble they've made."

Joyce had him by the arm and went with him to the library door. She gave him an affectionate little pat.

"Run along, honey. Try not to be too sore at us. The Randalls have some endearing traits, too."

"Well, but listen," McKay protested. "They've been accusing me of a lot of things. I want them to understand—"

"They will!" Joyce promised heartily. "Believe me, they'll understand. I'll attend to that, don't you worry!"

CHAPTER XIV

JOYCE'S ULTIMATUM



McKAY took his aching head into the garden behind his house. It was an old-fashioned garden, and the zinnias were wonderful. From it he could see across the bright moorland to the sea, now a sheet of silver under the early sun. Three schooners under full sail swam

in dim silhouette through the glittering haze along the horizon. It was a fine morning, a perfect, glorious October morning, and McKay was glad of it.

His head ached, but his heart didn't. Joyce loved him. He loved Joyce. Nothing else mattered.

Probably she was everything he disapproved of, but she was also the things he did approve of—the deep, vital, necessary things. She was truth and courage and steadfast loyalty. What were conventions compared to that?

Anyway, there wasn't any reasoning about it. He loved her and he was the luckiest man alive because Elsa had jilted him.

At least half an hour went by and there had not been a sound from the house. Then Peter Randall came down the path. He eyed McKay a little sheepishly, but pleased. He offered his hand and it was promptly accepted.

"Jimmy, I'm sorry I misjudged you."

"That's nothing. Don't bother about it!"

"Er—about that divorce action, Jimmy—"

"Yes?"

"Well, I guess we'll let that drop. Mrs. Randall and I have—er—talked things over. Shame to break up a marriage, my boy! Why, Lord, we've rubbed along for twenty-three years. Been pretty happy a lot of that time. Nobody can be happy all the time, but a home's a pretty fine thing. Two people ought to try hard to keep a home together, my boy!"

"That's right, sir," McKay agreed, wondering greatly.

"So we'll just forget that lawsuit," said Joyce's father. "And—hello, here come the ladies!"

Joyce and her mother looked both tearful and smiling.

"I just ran out to say I'm getting breakfast," Mrs. Randall announced. "I'm making free with your kitchen,

Mr. McKay. And it won't be long, now. Peter, I'll need your help. I guess you still know how to set a table!"

"And wash dishes!" Randall agreed heartily. He caught his wife about the waist. "Lord, Belle, we washed our own dishes often enough when we lived in the little flat on Bleecker Street!"

Husband and wife went into the house together. Joyce remained. McKay turned on her eagerly.

"How in the world did you do that?"

"Got a cigarette, Jimmy darling? Thanks." Joyce blew a cloud of smoke and smiled widely. "Simple, Jimmy. I told them the truth about each other, just what I told you. Then I told them about us. I told them I passed myself as your wife and the whole darn village knows it by now. I told them they had to forget their quarrel, quit acting like children, and drop that divorce suit. And they promised to behave the way their generation should!"

"But how did you make them do that?"

Joyce's smile widened.

"Jimmy, I told them if they didn't behave, I wouldn't behave, either. I told them I would do some of the things they've been accusing me of. And I said I'd start right here, by having a heavy affair with you. And—well, I told them I didn't think it would be very hard to start a heavy affair with you, because—well, because I thought you had fallen for me pretty hard already."

The smile faded from Joyce's lips. Her voice had grown uncertain and breathless. Her eyes were shy.

"They believe that?" McKay exclaimed.

"Yes. Is it true, Jimmy?"

"I'll tell the world it's true!" McKay's arms crushed her to him. The sudden exertion was bad for his head, very bad. But he didn't give a damn about his head any more.

The Gunman of Tickfall

By E. K. Means



The astonishing career of Chorus Tune, whose deadly rifle had six notches carved on its butt

WHUT is become of dat nigger preacher?" Skeeter Butts asked, as he sat down at the worn pine table in the Henscratch and glared around him impatiently. "Us always holds our meetin's wid benefit of clergy."

"I passed him on de road," Pap Curtain replied. "Vinegar said he wus gwine down town to offer religious advices to a member of his church."

"Did he say it wus a lady member?" Figger Bush asked eagerly. "Mebbe Vinegar is on de trail of a scandal!"

"He told me it wus a gen'leman friend," Pap informed him. "Still, I have knowed men to git mixed up in some juicy scandals. I done started a couple myse'f, in my day; but I done got too old now to leave town eve'y time de grand jury meets, so I exon-

cise discretion. Some folks has sense, an' some is got discretion. I never had no sense, but I hab discretion."

"I reckon we better wait fer de clergy," Skeeter Butts said, as he lighted a cigarette. "Onless Vinegar fatches in somepin, dar ain't nothin' befo' de house nohow; but I know, when Vinegar comes, it won't be nothin' so important. Dese here is pretty quiet times."

"Dat's so," Pap Curtain mourned. "It 'pears to me, as I git older, dat life ain't got no pep. I done seen eve'ything dar is to see, an' nothin' mo' ain't wuth lookin' at. I done heard eve'ything wuth hearin', an' 'tain't no use to listen no mo'; an' I done come to a point whar I knows eve'ything."

"You ain't know eve'ything," Skeeter Butts snapped. "Fer ninstance, does you know whether or not a incubator chicken loves its mamma?"

"I knows it don't," Pap Curtain answered promptly. "'Tain't reasomble. Now you listen to me argufy 'bout dat—"

But the portly form of Vinegar Atts darkened the door at this stage of the discussion, and the argument was postponed in their interest over where Vinegar had been and what he had brought.

"I'm late," Vinegar said, fanning himself with his hat. "Been out admonishin' a member."

"Who mought it be?" Skeeter Butts inquired.

"Nigger named Tune," Vinegar told him.

"Good gosh!" Pap Curtain exclaimed in disgust. "Chorus Tune! Whut you want to waste yo' time on a half-wit idiot fer? Ain't de Bible advice you not to be idly employed?"

"I feel sorry fer Tune," Vinegar said. "Did you ever see sich a whupped dawg in all yo' life? Dat pore coon looks all de time like he wus jes' ready to lay down on his back an' let us stomp on his head. It ain't nachel fer a man to ack dat way."

"Suttinly, but Tune ain't no man," replied Skeeter. "He mus' hab had some kind of raisin' dat makes him feel like a worm of de dust. He looks like his mind is bothered, an' like he jes' craves to crawl away all de time."

"Mebbe we oughter go to see him an' say somepin to him dat will stiffen his backbone," Figger Bush suggested. "Sometimes we kin tell a man dat he's somepin, an' he'll believe it."

"It would be a awful lie to tell Chorus Tune dat he's somebody," Pap Curtain snarled. "Why, ef Chorus Tune wus settin' right here by me alone, I'd say dar warn't nobody in dis place but me."

"I argufied along dem same lines wid Tune jes' now," Vinegar said. "Ef he wucks fer white folks, he lets 'em scandalize him all de time. Ef he do a favor fer a nigger, he lets de very feller he favorizes blim-blam him

aroun' an' kick him about like he wus a ol' football. I told him to grow some teeth an' bite somebody."

"Dar ain't but two things whut kin git a nigger in a fix like Tune is in," Pap Curtain declared in his omniscience. "Either dat nigger cormitted some crime whut lays heavy on his mind, or some woman done got his goat."

"Well, which is it?" Skeeter Butts snapped. "You specified dat you knows eve'ything. Now tell us!"

"It am both," Pap Curtain replied with conviction, and none could gainsay him.

"I move we go an' wait on Tune an' ax fer details," Figger Bush suggested.

"Whar is dis coon at?" Pap Curtain inquired.

"'Twon't be no trouble to find him," replied Skeeter Butts. "Look fer him under a rock, or behind a tree, whar no harm kin happen to him."

They found him sitting in the corner of a fence.

"I done fotch some friends to talk to you, Tune," said Vinegar, as they all sat down upon the ground beside him.

"I don't feel like talkin'," Tune answered ungraciously.

"We know dat," Vinegar said; "but, you see, we's kind of oneasy about yo' future in dis town. We hab a high class of high-class niggers in dis town, an' you's lowerin' de grade, because you's de low-classdest we know. Now we wants you to measure up to de best. We aims to encourage you to roach up yo' hair, an' hold up yo' head, an' stiff up yo' backbone, an' h'ist up yo' foots, an' put 'em down on de ground like you wusn't skeart you'd tread on a snake."

Tune slumped over, and his eyes gazed down at the ground.

"We don't want to git run out of town," Skeeter Butts put in. "I know you look like you expeck it all de time, an' 'tain't no mo' dan you deserve. A feller could take a corncob an' put a

lightnin' bug on de end of it, an' run you into de Mississipp' River!"

"Mebbe so," Tune admitted humbly. "I always tries to hold myse'f in. Dis is a white man's country, an' a nigger never starts anything but trouble."

"You ain't never been nothin' but harmless all yo' days, is you?" Pap Curtain inquired.

"Depends on whut you calls harmless," Tune said modestly.

"Is you ever had any trouble wid de ladies?" Vinegar asked.

"Naw, suh," Tune replied. "I's had my troubles, but dey didn't git as fur as de ladies. Of co'se dey done pestered me a little, but I ain't ashamed of whut I done under dem succumstances. When a woman besets a man, dar ain't nothin' to do but run."

"Is you had any trouble wid de law?" Pap inquired.

"Naw, suh," declared Tune. "I left out befo' de law got aroun' to me."

"So dat's how come you done arrive in Tickfall," Skeeter inferred. "I mought 'a' knowed somepin chased you in here!"

"Dat's part of de reason," Tune admitted. "Excusin' dat, I got into a little trouble wid a man about some money, an' I figgered it wus my move."

"Is de man lookin' fer you?" Vinegar asked.

"Naw! He figgered he got off cheap wid whut I took, an' now he's glad to be rid of me. He's my paw."

"Huh!" Pap Curtain grunted. "Stealin' from yo' kinfolks don't count. I wish my kinfolks had somepin I could steal!"

"I wus younger dan I am now, an' I didn't take enough," Tune grinned in a bashful way. "You see, my pap is pretty well to do. Ef I'd stayed home an' behaved myse'f, he would 'a' sot me up in bizness. When he died, he would 'a' inherited me his money. Now I'm out—out of money, out of clothes, out of a job, out of my folks."

"Why don't you go home like a projeckin' son an' say you's sorry fer

whut you done?" Vinegar Atts inquired.

"Paw wouldn't believe it," Tune replied simply.

"Mebbe us fo' could kinder stand fer you," Skeeter Butts suggested. "You's sorry, ain't you?"

"Yep."

"Jes' as you feel right now, you don't crave to steal no mo', does you?" Figger Bush asked.

"Nope."

"You could go home an' tell yo' pap dat you learnt a lesson, couldn't you?" Vinegar inquired.

"Yep."

"I think dis here sinner has repented enough, fer a nigger," Pap Curtain announced. "I move we gib him a good recommend an' send him home to his paw."

"Will you gib me a writin' on paper?" Tune asked.

"Suttinly," Vinegar told him. "We'll go to de Henscratch an' frame it up fer you now, an' you kin come up dar an' git it."

II

FOUR men sat around a pine table in the Henscratch, perspiring at the laborious task of writing a letter of recommendation—something they had never before attempted. This is how it began:

TO WHO IT MEBBE CONSRND:

The barow of this is C. Toon, he is a niggroe. Says he have done bad & now sorry. Wont do so no more. Hav told us Four Undsined the same. Craves for us to say to ech and evry persn that he is all rite.

"Hold on here, fellers!" Skeeter Butts said. "I don't see how a letter of recommend kin do a nigger any good. Dem whut cain't read it won't know whut it is, an' dem whut kin read it won't believe whut it says. I move we go out an' gib dis nigger a reppitation in Tickfall by whut we say, an' not by whut we write."

"Whut had we oughter say?" Figger Bush asked.

"Huh!" Skeeter grunted. "We kin fix dis man so dat people will believe he's de most dangersome pusson whut ever come to Tickfall. He ain't never got nothin' to say, so we kin esplain dat bitin' dawgs don't bark. He walks aroun' kind of soft an' easy, an' we kin esplain dat all brave mens is gentle an' low-spoke. He looks like he's always hesitatin' about somepin, an' we kin tell people dat he's slow an' easy because he's afraid to put forth his strength."

"Lawd!" Pap Curtain laughed. "We done raised up a whole lot of niggers in dis worl', but dis am de fust time we's ever tried to make a hero out'n a hound!"

"It kin be did," Vinegar Atts informed him. "De Bible say 'as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he,' an' whutever folks thinks a feller is dat's whut he is to dem. Ef we kin git Tune to believe dat he's a brave coon, he might git so rambunctuous dat he'll chase us all out of town; an' ef we thinks he's dangersome, we might git skeart to come back."

"De trouble wid dis plan is dat we got to tell a lot of lies," Pap Curtain asserted. "Now I don't mind lyin' when a lie is a present he'p in time of trouble. In-fack, I done told lies frequent, because I been in a heap of trouble in my day, an' I been married five times; but I'm not in favor of lyin' about somepin whut ain't so—"

"Tain't no lie to ax a question, is it?" Skeeter Butts interrupted.

"Naw! A question don't say nothin'," replied Pap.

"All right! We'll start things by axin' 'terrogations," Skeeter went on. "Den a lot of coons will guess at de rest an' tell de tale all aroun' de town."

"Won't dey be lyin'?" Vinegar Atts asked.

"Naw!" Skeeter asserted. "Dey'll only be mistaken."

At that point a customer came into the place and stopped at the counter for a cold drink. Skeeter waited until

the visitor had been served, and then called to him:

"Hunk, does you know a nigger name Chorus Tune?"

"Yep."

"Do he look dangersome to you?" Skeeter asked.

"Naw! He looks like a damn fool to me."

"Is you heard anybody say dat Tune had kilt a number of people?" Skeeter continued.

"Nope! Ef he did, he must hab run over 'em tryin' to git away from somepin he wus skeart of," Hunk replied.

"Ef you'd kilt five or six men, you'd be kind of easy-mannered, so you wouldn't hab to kill no mo', wouldn't you?" Skeeter asked.

Hunk reflected upon this for a moment. Then he looked up, showing the whites of his eyes, and asked in a changed voice:

"Is dat how come Tune's so slinky?"

"Don't it seem kind of nachel fer him to be dat way?" Skeeter inquired in return.

"Mebbe so," Hunk agreed; "but ef I wus lookin' fer a killer, I wouldn't pick on Tune. He don't 'pear like no brave man to me."

"How kin you tell whut a brave man looks like?" Skeeter asked.

"Huh!" Hunk snorted. "A garter snake don't look like a rattler or a moccasin or a blow adder, an' don't act peevish like dem do, neither. A cotton-tail rabbit don't skeer me like a bear do. Ef dis here Tune ever kilt six men, he mus' hab been paddlin' a boat whut turnt over an' eve'ybody got drowned but him!"

Hunk turned and stamped out, but his head was bent and his expression was thoughtful and uncertain.

"Dar now!" Skeeter remarked with great satisfaction. "I never done a thing but ax questions, but soup suspicion is done riz up in Hunk's mind. He'll pass de word on to yuthers, an' in no time de little nigger kids in Tickfall

will be runnin' down de alleys to git away from Tune eve'y time dey sees him on de street."

"Looky here, fellers," Figger Bush exclaimed. "A gunman whut don't tote a gun don't make such a awful brave impression on people. He's like a rattlesnake whut ain't got no rattles—he don't abbertize. I knows whar I kin git a ol' gun wid a barrel about six foot long. Ef we bestow dat weapon on Tune, he'll hab to take it wid him eve'ywhar he goes, because he ain't got no home nor nowhar to keep it."

"Dat will he'p a heap," Pap Curtain snarled. "I cornfess dat a long-barrel gun has always been cornvincin' to me. I rickoleck when I wus courtin' dat woman in Sawtown—"

But no member of the Big Four was ever permitted to introduce reminiscences in the sessions of the quartet, for the reason that all of them had heard all their stories many times before.

And so it happened that a few questions asked by the Big Four of the talkative inhabitants of Tickfall speedily started tongues to wagging. Public opinion soon held that Tune was a gentle creature for the same reason that a thoughtful and considerate elephant might be cautious in walking through a china shop.

When the Big Four made Tune a formal presentation of an old rifle, rusty and antiquated, the poor man felt that he had received the greatest gift of his barren life. His gratitude was pitiful, and his pride in his new possession was childlike. Having secured oil and rags and cleaning rods, he seated himself in conspicuous places where others could see him and admire his weapon, and spent many hours of his idle day in cleaning and polishing the old gun.

Curiosity prompted many questions.

"Whut you cleanin' up yo' ole rifle fer, Tune?" Hunk inquired.

"I might want to shoot at somepin."

"Is you a good shot?" Hunk asked. "Folks would ruther be behind me dan befo' me when I shoots," Tune said modestly.

"I hear tell dat you's done a whole heap of shootin' in yo' day," Hunk suggested.

"Practice makes puffleck," Tune replied vaguely, as he paused to examine several notches on the butt of his new weapon.

He wondered why those marks had been cut. He did not know that an old hunter had once owned the rifle, and had cut them to record the number of deer he had slain.

To the eyes of Hunk these notches indicated the number of men Tune had killed, and his eyes popped out as he counted six marks upon the rusty old rifle. Hurrying off, he carried the news to the utmost boundaries of Tickfall, and proclaimed it to every colored inhabitant thereof.

In the meantime the Big Four had become interested in other things, and had forgotten all about Tune and his gun. Now and then they noticed him passing along the street, carrying his weapon, but they saw no entertainment in continuing with him. They felt like the boy scout who has done his daily good deed. Tune looked happy and contented, so they left it to the recording angel to make the proper entry opposite their names.

"A gun do he'p a nigger to look like somebody," Pap said. "I bet nobody ain't kicked Tune recent!"

III

It is easy to point out a gunman if he carries a gun. In a little while this mark of distinction made Tune one of the best known negroes in Tickfall.

The white people, unaware of his sinister reputation among those of his own race, paid no attention to him. There was always some poor negro to be seen carrying a gun on his way out to the fields to still-hunt for rabbits or squirrels. When money was scarce,

and they were unable to purchase fresh meat in the market, colored men would slink along the dusty lanes about sundown and pot the little rabbits hopping out from the fences.

Among his own people Tune's gun soon became the symbol of a desperate character. His apologetic manner was the caution of a man who feared to injure others unjustly. His low voice was interpreted as his constant guardianship of a fierce tongue and temper. His love of solitude was the loneliness of a man who brooded much over the ruin he had wrought. The people of his race held a most respectful attitude toward him.

"I treats him nice an' watches him," one negro expressed it.

One day Tune wandered into a store kept by a colored man. He laid his gun down across the counter and plaintively remarked that he would like to have some chawin' terbacker, but he had no money to pay for it.

"Yes, suh, Tune," the storekeeper replied promptly. "I onderstan' jes' how it is, an' jes' whut you means. Yes, suh, I'll let you hab de chawin' now on credick, an' you kin pay me whenever you gits ready. Yes, suh, I ain't in no hurry fer my pay. Leastwise, I won't press you fer it. I don't gib credick in my little bizness, but I'm shore you kin remember dat you owe me, an' it 'll be all right!"

Tune, completely mystified, accepted the tobacco and walked out, wondering how he got it without having to pay for it.

In the next few days the storekeeper had much to tell about how the outlaw had come into the place and in that quiet, slow, sly, dangerous manner of his had laid his gun across the counter, with the muzzle pointing toward the proprietor, and had asked for tobacco and walked out without saying a word about paying for it.

"He 'peared to be worrited, an' I didn't want to worry him no mo'," the storekeeper explained. "I'd rather

lose a little chawin' dan to lose my life!"

Just as a man in military uniform becomes a center of attraction to the women, so the man with the gun found, as he expressed it, that the "women folks besot him." Tune had never been a ladies' man; but when he found that they made opportunities to meet him and talk to him, he began to give attention to his personal appearance. He decided that he needed a new suit of clothes.

One of the annual sources of revenue in the Shoofly Church was known as a rummage sale. The colored people went from house to house in the town and asked their white friends to rummage in the attic, bring out some cast off garments, and donate them for the sale, the profits going for the benefit of the church. Such a sale was in progress in an old cotton shed near the station, and it was there that Tune went to secure a trousseau.

Never before, probably, had a man gone shopping in Tickfall with a long and dangerous-looking rifle in his hands. Tune's reputation was now well established, and no one had any desire to offend the "killer." When he picked out the hat he wanted from a pile that reposed in a corner, and rather timidly explained that he had no money to pay for it, the women in the hat department promptly announced that those hats had cost them nothing. They would be glad, they would feel honored, to give one to Tune!

Walking from booth to booth, he found the same spirit of eager sacrifice upon the part of every one with whom he dealt. All the church people seemed glad to let him have anything he wanted free of charge, and appeared relieved and happy when he took what he wanted and passed on with his gun. This was mysterious to Tune, but it made him feel that the colored folks of Tickfall were the most kind-hearted and generous people he had ever heard of anywhere.

Thus it happened that Tickfall's gunman became one of the best dressed inhabitants of the town. Never parting with his weapon, he walked the streets as if he was a guardian of the civic peace. When he felt hungry, he walked up to the door of some cabin and asked for food, and his appeal was never denied. Several times he went into the Shin Bone Restaurant, placed his gun across the top of the table, and expressed his need of a dinner. When he asked what the food cost, Shin Bone showed the whites of his eyes and assured Tune that the dinner was on the house, and would not cost him a cent.

"Mebbe you kin do somepin fer me some time," Shin said. "I's proud to feed you now an' den. 'Tain't no loss to me."

Now it happened that years before, over on the other side of the Little Moccasin Swamp, a negro had acquired ownership of a patch of the jungle. He had spent the rest of his life in cutting down the trees, clearing out the jungle growth, and draining the land by digging ditches through a matted mass of vegetable roots ages old. He had cultivated the land and had prospered, and then, dying, had left one daughter as sole heir to the property.

For awhile the negro woman had lived there unmolested, and then two lawless white "swamp rats," who had sought refuge in the woods to avoid the officers of the law, looked upon the house and land with covetous eyes and planned to oust the girl and get possession. Knowing that she lived far away from the town, and that she had no friend or neighbor to protect her, they decided that it would be a simple matter to terrify her and run her out of the place.

Having visited Tickfall on various occasions, these two men had seen the town's notorious gunman. They had talked with him, and had heard the talk about him—talk so imaginative and so far removed from the facts in the case.

They had considered proposing to Tune to join them, on the principle that birds of a feather should flock together.

To their surprise, however, they found that they could not get closely acquainted with the supposedly lawless negro. Tune was afraid of the white men, and made no effort to meet them on friendly terms; and they, blinded by his reputation for boldness, concluded that he was a deep, dark, dangerous character, and that he might be too much for them. They knew little about the colored people, for they had come down from the North to hide in the Louisiana swamps.

They noticed that Tune never sat down to rest without placing his back against a solid brick wall, or a thick tree, which no bullet fired from the rear could penetrate, and that he always rested his gun across his knees. Once they saw him lie down in the shade of a tree with apparent indifference to danger, as if he was going to sleep; but when they walked carelessly past the spot where he was lying, they noticed that there were two large holes cut in the top of his ragged wool hat. They felt sure that two deadly, watchful, oyster-colored eyes were staring at them through those holes, as unwinking and unafraid as the eyes of a rattlesnake.

So they "drew the color line," and abandoned the idea of getting Tune in with them. Indeed, they practically forgot him except upon the occasion of their visits to Tickfall, when they always saw him walking about the streets.

Other negroes seemed to have friends, but Tune was always alone. Other colored men paused on the street corners, got in the way of pedestrians, and laughed and argued and cut up monkey shins; but Tune was never one of those groups. Wherever he stood or walked, both white and black people usually went by with no sign of recognition, paying no more attention

to him than if he had been a hitching post.

All these facts were due to reasons altogether different from the reasons which the two white men surmised; but what they saw, or thought they saw, gave them a wholesome respect for the deadly black man who walked the streets armed and ready!

They themselves were not gunmen. They had started as small-town rowdies, engaging in small thefts in a village, selling a little bootleg liquor, successful in a few fraudulent escapades. Then there came an opportunity to rob the village post office; and after that, fleeing from the tireless sleuthing of the government, they had traveled far and hidden in the Louisiana jungle.

For years they had lived on fish and frogs and the small game of the woods, living in hollow sycamore trees, drinking water out of the decayed places in the top of cypress stumps. They longed for a dwelling place, and it was just about the measure of their capacity as outlaws to attempt to deprive a defenseless negro girl of her home.

IV

IN sore distress at the prospect of losing her little place out at the edge of the swamp, Needa Cain came to Tickfall and called upon the Big Four. She detailed the story of her trouble, told them how she had come into possession of her patch of land, and how the white men had attempted to scare her away and take it from her.

"Dat same thing done been did frequently," Pap Curtain said, shaking his head sadly. "I ain't never know how to pervent it. Dis here's a white man's country, an' a nigger ain't got no rights."

"Us is got some white friends in Tickfall whut won't let a nigger be picked on," Vinegar Atts replied. "We mought git de sheriff and Kunnel Tom Gaitskill to mess wid dis case. I always feels mighty safe when dey say dey'll 'tend to somepin fer me!"

"De trouble wid white folks is dat you got to fool wid a lot of lawyers an' law papers, an' mebbe hab a lawsuit in de cotehouse an' sich," Needa said. "Dat costs a heap of money, an' atter you done spent all de money you got you lose de case an' got to pay de costs."

"Ain't it de truth?" Figger Bush exclaimed. "I got in trouble wid de cotehouse once fer leg-bootin', an' atter I spent all my money de judge—"

"I don't see how us Big Four kin he'p you, Needa," Skeeter Butts interrupted. "You see, dar ain't no fightin' men among us. Us is bizness men. Now ef you had a pet bear or a couple bulldawgs, an' dem white men wus afraid to come aroun', or ef de place wus covered wid rattlesnakes, so it would be dangerous to live dar—but nothin' like dat cain't happen. Dat would be too much luck fer a nigger!"

"De way I sees it, it's like dis," Pap Curtain contributed. "Dem white men is swamp rats, an' dey done got tired livin' in holler trees, or in some little mud hut whut dey built in de woods, an' dey's huntin' fer a good, comfortable home whut ain't too near to town an' de grand jury. Now, ef Needa could find a nigger swamp rat whut ain't afraid to fight fer his rights, an' would invite him to come to her cabin an' keep dem white men off, you could bury all you kilt out dar an' nobody would miss 'em."

"Dat's perzackly de advices I needs," said Needa Cain, as she rose to her feet. "I'm gwine hunt me up a brave nigger man an' marry him, an' den I'll tell him to fight fer his home an' his fireside!"

"Who you gwine pick out?" Vinegar asked.

"I cain't tell ontill I axes him to marry me," replied Needa, laughing; "but I think I'll look to him like I wus wuth havin', an' all I axes of him is dat he ain't skeart of nothin'."

The girl walked out, and the four men looked at each other in silence for a moment. Then Pap Curtain said:

"Dar's a whole lot of Redbones livin' up in dem woods on Lake Moreau. Dey's half Injun an' half nigger an' half rattlesnake, an' de rest is all pure devil, an' dey dotes on gittin' in a fight. Needa knows 'em all, an' I don't misdoubt dat she will make a good pick."

And then they forgot the incident.

On that same day Chorus Tune disappeared from Tickfall.

A few days after Needa's visit to Tickfall, two slinking white men appeared in the vicinity of her cabin in the woods and peered through the underbrush toward the house that they coveted. What they saw sent a cold shiver up their spines.

Chorus Tune was sitting on the little front porch. His straight-backed chair was tilted back against the cabin wall, his soft hat was drawn low over his eyes, and his heels were hung on the front rounds of the chair. His long rifle rested across his knees, and his right hand lay upon the trigger guard, while his thumb toyed with the hammer. He was as motionless as a stone dog upon a lawn; but to the white men his very stillness was deadly, like the reserve energy of a snake poised and ready to strike.

The two men looked at each other. Then they cautiously sank down upon all fours and remained motionless for a long time. Tune's face was turned toward them, and there was not the slightest movement to indicate any variation in the deadly watchfulness of the bold, bad man from Tickfall. They dared not turn their backs on him and try to crawl away; so they began to move slowly backward.

Great drops of nervous perspiration fell from their faces like rain, and at every backward step they besought all the gods they knew to grant them silence and invisibility and a safe escape. Their peril intensified their resolution that if they managed to escape unhurt they would go away from that place, and nobody need ever expect

them to return for any reason at all.

All this time, and for an hour afterward, Chorus Tune sat asleep in his chair, uninterrupted, unafraid, dreaming pleasantly in the happy content of a married man whose wife and home suited him exactly. He was not disturbed until Needa Tune called him to dinner. Neither of them ever knew that two designing white men had abandoned their purpose to call upon them.

For the first time in his life Tune had found himself in possession of something that interested him. The little house and the patch of land were his, and when he wanted to work he could sell the result for money. He knew how to secure and preserve alligator hides and rattlesnake skins, how to weave the willows of the lake into Indian baskets, how to ship frogs to the market in New Orleans, and how to till the little farm and make the best of it. Needa toiled beside him, contributing her knowledge from years of living in the woods; and life opened wide the doors of happiness to them.

Two months after his marriage Chorus Tune made his first visit to Tickfall. He came stalking into the Henscratch, carrying his familiar rifle, and walked up to the table where the Big Four sat.

"Does you niggers know anybody in town whut kin fix a broke gun?" he inquired.

"Mebbe de blacksmith knows how," Vinegar replied. "Is yo' gun broke?"

"Yes, suh," Tune said. "It's been broke ever since you gib it to me."

"Whut ails it?" Skeeter inquired.

"It's broke whar you put de cartridge in at," Tune explained. "I ain't never shot it off a single time, because I ain't never been able to load it."

"My Lawd!" Vinegar howled. "An' you is knowed as de gunman of Tickfall!"

"Yes, suh, but I ain't never wasted no money on cartridges, an' I ain't never had a chance to shoot dis gun up to now."

Thistle Down

By Agnes Sligh Turnbull



She stared Barney straight
in the eyes

Was there ever a stranger experience of matrimony than what befell Barney Vail, the most popular member of the Seven Jolly Dodgers?



HIS is really Dick Wetherbee's story, just as he told it to Townsend one raw March night—slowly, as a difficult story is told between men, and with many pauses, in which there was no sound except the soft puff of the smoke rolling from their mouths and curling from their pipes, and the crackle of the logs on the hearth.

Townsend had just landed in New York that day after three years in the Orient. He had barely installed him-

self at his hotel when he called up Wetherbee.

Wetherbee was the sort of person whom one always calls up the first thing. By some curious arrangement with Providence he was never ill, or out of town, or busy. He seemed to exist for the delight of his friends. It would appear that he was always waiting about, with nothing else to do, for some one whom he could entertain.

"Not Townsend!" he cried, in answer to his friend's call. "Why, Bill, you darned old renegade, you! Jove,

I'm glad to hear your voice! Thought you were still in Mongolia or somewhere. When did you get in? To-day? Why, you confounded old sea serpent, you! I'll be right over. Oh, you have to be at the office to-day? Well, now see here, Bill—I'm in my same old diggings. You come down and have dinner with me and stay all night, and we'll mull things over. Leave your junk at the hotel. I'll fix you up. The old gang? Oh, they're flourishing. We'll round them up to-morrow. To-night I'll keep you to myself. Any changes? Yes, a few. I'll—well, I'll see you to-night, then, at seven. *Great to know you're back, old man!*"

Through the afternoon Townsend wondered about the rest of the crowd. Evidently, in the last three years, there had been happenings of which he hadn't heard. There was bound to be news, of course; for he had been out of reach of mail for six months, and then had sailed for home on short notice, without touching his old base. He had heard that Ted Horne was married, and that Doc Bishop was engaged; but word of that had reached him his first year out.

There were seven of them who had had a rare friendship from the days of their first long trousers till now. In college they had acquired the name of the Jolly Dodgers, because of their peculiar aptitude for getting out of scrapes; and the name still clung. They knew the same people, went to the same social affairs, sat in a solid row at all the "first nights," and were known collectively by all the best head waiters in the city.

"This table, sir? No, sir, very sorry—this is reserved for the Dodgers, sir."

In fact, to the elect group in which they moved, the Jolly Dodgers were a significant unit. The girls laughed at them, teased them, and hated their unity. It was an irritating anomaly that seven personable and interesting

young men should at certain times prefer to hobnob with one another, instead of finding delight in feminine companionship. Many a nervous debutante planning her first dance made sure, before issuing any other invitations, that her date would be acceptable to the Dodgers. More than one experienced hostess felt the success of her dinner assured if the Dodgers graciously consented to be present.

They carried with them everywhere that peculiar aura of mysterious withdrawal which comes of secrets shared and kept. Here were seven men who had laid their souls bare to one another, and who would die rather than betray the trust. The fact seemed to establish them in an impregnable romance.

While they had always been a close corporation, their loyalty took on a deeper note at the close of the Great War; for by a rare boon of Providence all seven of them came through it unscathed. The first night after they were all back again in New York happened to be a New Year's Eve; so they had foregathered in Wetherbee's apartment, and had stayed there till morning. What was told and done that night will never be known, except that they talked their souls clean of all they had been through, that there was plenty of laughter and cursing, and that more than once there were tears unashamed.

At dawn they drank a last toast and pledged themselves that no matter what came into their lives thereafter, if it was within the range of human possibility, they would meet each New Year's Eve until death parted them. That night should be sacred to the inviolable quality of their friendship.

There had been no break until Townsend went off to the Orient. Once Doc Bishop had come from New Orleans to keep the tryst, and once Barney Vail had traveled from Los Angeles; but they all agreed that Central Asia was a step too far, and absolved

Townsend temporarily from his oath. He had been forced to content himself with sending what were perhaps the most amazing messages ever transmitted by cable, and with receiving others quite as unique in reply.

On this raw March day, however, in the hotel where he had made his home since his parents died, some years before, and along the familiar city streets, his mind kept turning eagerly to the rest of the Dodgers. He hadn't realized how desperately he wanted to see them all again.

Wetherbee would be just the same as ever. He was the perennially suave young *dilettante*, living on the interest of his inheritance, knowing only the people he cared to know, writing a little carelessly now and then, when the mood was on, and sniffing about delicately for art treasures—doing nothing as a rule, but doing it like an artist and a gentleman.

Doc Bishop, he surmised, would be a little more nervous, more intense, than ever. His dark eyes would glow as he poured forth enthusiastic plans for a new hospital or clinic or health station until they stopped him. That was Doc—all fire and pep. He had the real brains of the crowd.

Van Dosen would be as funny as ever, his face as broad and bland, his jokes as irresistible. He would still look like anything but what he really was—a dramatic critic whose opinions were widely respected.

McPhillips would be heavier, Townsend imagined, and ruddier. He was the sort of chap who did himself well when it came to food and drink. He had the business head of the bunch. He bought and sold real estate where nobody else could. He could smell money six months off. Of the seven Dodgers he was the one for whom mothers angled as a substantial catch for their fledglings. So far he had eluded matrimony, though his fondness for the ladies had always amounted to a weakness.

But Ted Horne, the infant of the crowd, would be a settled family man, two and a half years married! Why, Townsend chuckled, there might even be a small Ted to greet him when he went to pay his respects at the house. Great Scott! It didn't seem possible, somehow, to think of any of the Dodgers in the paternal rôle—that is, none except Barney.

The thought brought Townsend to the heart and center of the group—Barney Vail. Barney, of them all, had been predestined for domesticity. He had every qualification for a perfect husband and father; and yet by some strange freak of fate he had always been utterly indifferent to women. He was as shy as a fawn whenever a girl crossed his horizon.

From their first dancing school days up to the last ball they had all attended before he sailed for the East, Townsend recalled with a grin the same picture of Barney—conscientiously but awkwardly trying to do his social duty when he had to; making futile, ostrich-like attempts to hide his six feet three of solid bone and muscle behind palms and in secluded window seats; always solemnly chivalrous to the point of ludicrousness in this casual age; and always sneaking away at the earliest possible moment, whenever it could be done without offense, in order to hasten back to the masculine atmosphere that he loved. That was one reason why the Dodgers had cohered through the years—because Barney had held them; had taught them what comradeship among men could mean; had united them by his own absorbing devotion to his friends.

Yes, Townsend reflected, of all the group Barney would be the least changed. He would blow in to-morrow, beaming all over, and would almost wring the returning traveler's hand off. He would plan a party for the crowd, would listen for hours on end to Townsend's stories of his travels, and would tell him a hundred

times how good it was to have him back. Barney would be just the same, thank God!

II

At seven that evening Townsend rang the bell at Wetherbee's apartment on Washington Square. Saki opened the door, greeted him by name as if he had been there the night before, and showed him into the long, book-lined living room, where Wetherbee was putting a new log on the fire. He sprang up as Townsend entered.

"Bill!"

"Dick, old man!"

In the second, Townsend had the feeling of being at last at home. One always felt at home in Wetherbee's room. It took you to itself in its soft, deep warmth and color. It was *your* room—the one you would have created for yourself if you had only had the power to imagine it. Townsend relaxed into it now with a deep sigh of satisfaction.

"I'm having dinner served in here, Bill," Wetherbee announced. "I knew you liked having it by the fire. This damned March wind seems to sneak into every room in the house. There, how's that?" he asked, as a sudden burst of flame caught the new log.

"Great, Dick! Jove, if you knew how good this seems to me after knocking about in the wilds for three years! This mining business isn't all it's cracked up to be, unless you're half barbarian to begin with. Just now I feel as if I couldn't get enough of soft beds, soft chairs, soft food, cabarets, first nights, pretty girls, swanky clothes—gad, I want to swallow New York at a gulp! I want to slop all over each darned old Dodger and tell him to his face how much I think of him and how I've missed him! That's the state of mind I'm in, Dick. Pretty squashy, isn't it? By the way, how's Barney?"

"Oh, he's all right," replied Wetherbee, suddenly turning away to look for a special brand of cigarette; "but

wait till you hear the news about Ted."

"Oh, I've guessed that already," Townsend laughed. "Boy or girl?"

"Both—twins, by the Lord Harry! Ted's insufferable—acts as if he had originated all the forces of creation. The Dodgers went up one night and christened the kids in the nursery—baptized them in champagne, and called them Cain and Abel—first children born in the world, you know. Pretty subtle, we thought. The youngsters howled bloody murder, and poor little Mrs. Ted thought we were killing them. Good sport, though. She wept outside the door and left Ted to rescue his offspring. We sent her roses next day, and some trifles for the infants, to atone."

Saki brought the table, and in a moment the perfect meal was under way. All through it, along with the delicious viands, Wetherbee fed to his guest the news for which Townsend was hungry. He told all about Doc Bishop's engagement and marriage. The Dodgers approved of his choice. He told of McPhillips's phenomenal deal with a Long Island realty company. He had become a very rich man.

"And what about old Barney?" Townsend inquired eagerly.

"Oh he's all right. You know Van has quit his newspaper and is putting all his time on a novel. He thinks he has an idea by the tail. I don't know how he'll make out with it."

"So! Say, Dick, do you suppose we could get hold of Barney to-night?"

"I'm afraid not." Wetherbee busied himself unnecessarily with the dessert. "By the way, I think we should look in on Ted and his family to-morrow. He's bursting to exhibit them."

And then Townsend knew that something had happened to Barney—something that Wetherbee was loath to tell. A cold dread took hold of him, for he realized now another thing of which he had been becoming slowly aware—that Wetherbee himself was changed. In the full light, his face

looked thinner. There were new lines there, and something of his old debonair carelessness was gone.

For the rest of the meal Townsend himself did the talking, as an opiate against his fears; but when Saki had removed the coffee cups, he filled his pipe slowly and then leaned forward.

"Come clean, Dick! I want the truth. What's happened to Barney?"

Wetherbee laid a fresh log on the fire and then sat staring at it.

"I'm going to tell you, Bill; but it had to wait till now. It's not the sort of thing one discusses over a dinner table. As it is, it's one of the hardest things I've ever done to go all over it; but you have to know. When you see him—his hair—"

"What about his hair?"

"It's white."

"My God, Dick!"

"White as snow. I was with him—Doc and I. You know how you hear of things like that and don't believe them? Well, I know it now. I've seen it happen; although, strange to say, neither of us noticed it till Thistle cried out," he added musingly.

"Thistle?" repeated Townsend.

"Who is Thistle?"

"She is the story," Wetherbee said quietly.

Then, twisting the lamp so that his own face was in the shadow, he began.

"The thing started last fall, early in September," he said, speaking slowly. "We were all just back in town, the six of us, and I'd had the bunch here for dinner. We didn't know what to do later. Barney, I remember, wanted to stick around here all night and play poker, but Mac and Doc and Van were all dead set on going to the Crystal Cup, a new cabaret they'd heard of, where they had some pretty smart dancing and some girls from abroad that all the fellows were raving about. Barney gave in, of course, and we broke up the game a little before midnight and started. I wasn't keen on it myself. There was something about

Barney's face as he got up from the table—oh, I know it sounds foolish, but I had a premonition that night. I felt that we were letting ourselves in for something.

"We got up to the Crystal Cup about half past twelve. De Corda was running the place. You remember him? He used to be at that expensive little joint on Forty-Sixth Street. Of course he remembered us. He hunted up a table near the front, ushered us up himself with great pomp and circumstance, got the head waiter to take our orders, and made a stir over us generally. We saw a few people we knew, and one young fool who had been drinking got up and shouted:

"'Rah for the Dodgers!'"

"So it was a few minutes before we got settled enough to notice what was going on on the stage. As a matter of fact, nothing had been going on just then; for the solo dancer had stopped her act when she found we were crabbing it by distracting the attention of the audience. When we all looked up, she gave us a long stare and began what I think was the cleverest dance I've ever seen put on; and I've seen a few. I noticed then, by the card, that the dancer was featured as 'Thistle Down.'

"She was a little thing, with a sort of eerie quality about her. You know what the Scotch mean by *fey*? Well, she looked like that—a sort of sprite, an elf. She had big blue-black eyes and dark hair that fluffed out around her head and yet wasn't curly. Either she was an artist with her make-up or else she was unpainted. There was a pinkness, of course, to her cheeks, and yet a pallor, too. She wore darned little of anything. What she had on was a fluff of white, with a topknot of it on her hair.

"She didn't actually seem to dance—she floated. She was in the air as often as she was on the floor. You would have thought a wind was blowing her. You suddenly saw long

stretches of moors, with gorse and heather and an autumn sunset—at least, that's what *I* saw. Behind her the chorus was lined up in green, prickly-looking ruffles and purple topknots, like thistles. Mighty clever, the whole idea!

"At the end, the girl seemed to blow here and there for a minute and then dropped in a little heap in the center of the stage. I don't see yet what she did with her arms and legs, but she doubled them under somehow. All you could see was a bunch of white fluff on the floor. Of course, the thing made a furious hit. The chorus did their stuff, but there was a steady shout for 'Thistle Down, Thistle Down!'

"So she had to repeat the dance. It was while she was at it that I felt Mac catching my arm.

"Take a look at old Barney!" he growled. 'Had to pull his teeth out to get him here, and now watch him!'

"Then I saw Barney."

Wetherbee stopped, and for a long minute fingered his pipe.

"The faces of men," he pronounced slowly at last, as if entirely digressing, "give the dead lie to all this sloppy optimism of the *Pollyannas* and joy bringers. They're a sad commentary on life as it is. You know how a thoroughly happy face in a crowd arrests you? It's so rare, so very rare—that's why. I used to watch for that kind of thing on young girls' faces—the light, you know, the perfect belief in the goodness of everything; but nowadays even the flappers are old. They're disillusioned and bored at seventeen."

Wetherbee gave a short laugh.

"What I'm trying to get at," he continued, "is that of late years I've got into the habit of studying faces to try to decide just how much of what we call happiness the owners are carrying about with them. So, when I saw Barney's at that moment, I jumped. It was the ultimate expression of what I had been watching for. It wasn't merely a look of pleasure, you know.

It was sheer, ecstatic joy, a miraculous fulfillment of hope. I know this must sound like rot to you as a description of Barney, but I've got to try to make you see it all from the start, as we did. I give you my word that at that moment he was transfigured. He might have been a young Greek god listening to Pan piping, and believing that the whole world was nothing but love and sylvan glades.

"To me, somehow, the way the thing was written all over him was frightful. I felt as uncomfortable as if he had suddenly stripped to the skin. There was a terrible nakedness about his expression that made me want to do something to cover him up. The girls in the chorus were eying him, and Thistle Down herself had noticed. She could hardly help it.

"At the end of the dance, as she took her encore, she came directly in front of our table and stared Barney straight in the eye. Then I saw that she wasn't the young, innocent fluff of white she looked to be in her act. She was older than I had thought—twenty-eight, perhaps—and her look was that of a highly sophisticated and experienced woman. Somehow her insolent smile of invitation, compared with that white light on Barney's face—

"I believe I could have killed her with my own hands that minute. If it had been any of the other fellows who had tumbled hard for a cabaret dancer, it would have been a joke. Any of the rest of us would have known how to play the game, you know; but old Barney, who had scarcely looked at a girl before, even the nicest of them, well—

"When the girls had left the stage we all began to be very peppy and hit it up as much as we could, to cover the thing. The rest of the bunch were all wise to what was going on, and I could tell from Doc's eyes and Ted's that they felt as I did. As soon as I could, I proposed that we should leave, and we all got up and started for the door

—all except Barney. He went straight to De Corda and had a talk with him. Then he joined us in the vestibule and told us that he was staying.

"We all fell upon him. We warned him, we razed him, we told him about poor old Reggie Masters, who had a bullet put through him by that little devil of a dancer in Chicago. We said everything we could think of to get Barney to come away with us; but he stared at us in a kind of hurt amazement for a minute and then shook us off as if we had been a litter of kittens.

" 'Listen, fellows,' he said. 'Have I ever interfered with any of you in your private affairs? Have I ever given advice when it wasn't asked for?'

"We all sheepishly admitted that he hadn't.

" 'Well, now,' he went on, 'will you please give me a little of the same treatment? I'm thirty-six years old and in full possession of my senses. To-night, for the first time in my life, I've seen the woman I want; and I don't intend to lose her. Now you boys go along and mind your own business.'

"Naturally there was nothing else to do, so we went. We came back here and had a drink and thrashed it all over. By the time they left, the fellows had all decided that we had acted like a pack of fools in remonstrating with Barney, and that we owed him an apology. I wasn't so sure myself. I still felt a curious sensation as of having stepped over a line that separated two of my lives, as it were."

III

WETHERBEE leaned forward suddenly and poked the fire, while Townsend stirred uneasily in his chair, watching his friend. Then Wetherbee went on:

"I slept late the next day. About noon Saki woke me to say that Mr. Barney wanted me on the phone, and it was very important. I jumped up and dived into the next room. Bar-

ney's voice came over the wire like an archangel singing bass.

" 'Dick,' he said, 'the most wonderful thing in the world has happened to me! Thistle has consented to marry me this afternoon.'

"I must have given a scream, for Saki came running in.

" 'For the love of Heaven, Barney,' I yelled, 'don't go a step farther—don't do anything till I see you!'

"But Barney was so steeped in bliss that he didn't even get the point of my excitement.

" 'Now calm down,' he said. 'I knew you'd want to be in on it, and the rest of the gang, too. You can all come, but you've got to behave. No monkey shines! The Little Church Around the Corner at four o'clock this afternoon!'

"Before I could get another word in, he had hung up. Well, I was wild. I rang up his office, and then his house, and then both of his clubs. Not a trace of him! I called up all the Dodgers and told them to drop everything and go on a still hunt for Barney. I said that we simply had to stop that marriage, if we chloroformed him and tied him up. Then I made a bee line for De Corda. He probably thought I was a prohibition agent, the way I fell upon him. I told him I *had* to know all he knew about Thistle Down.

"He hemmed and hawed, and said it wasn't his custom to discuss his employees, and so on; but I stuck, and presently I dug this much out of him—Thistle was the daughter of a French dancer and a Scotsman named Mac-Tavish. He had seen the mother dance twenty-five years before in Paris. She was a famous beauty—had no end of lovers, some of them royalty; but all at once this young Scot came on the scene and married her, to the amazement of everybody. They went back to Scotland, lived there till their daughter was born, and then parted. The woman came back to the stage, but soon went downhill. De Corda had

first heard of Thistle through a manager he knew in London, and had promptly signed her up for his cabaret. He was only praying now that no one would steal her from him.

"'De Corda,' I said, 'if you don't help me stop it, one of my best friends is going to marry Thistle at four o'clock this afternoon and make a lady of her. Then where will your act be?'"

"The poor old chap went crazy. He tore his hair and swore that the thing must not be. He had been in debt. Thistle was his big drawing card, and if she left him it would ruin him."

"'Besides,' he shouted, 'she is not the kind of girl a gentleman marries! Beautiful for an *affaire*, yes, but not for marriage, *non!* We must stop this, you and I—you for your friend, I for my show.'"

"Just then in walked Thistle, with Barney behind her. She looked stunning in a rose-colored homespun suit and a hat with a rose quill—enough to make a man's heart beat, you know. I almost forgave Barney for a minute. Then she walked over to De Corda."

"'Hello, Cordy!' she said, cocking her head on one side. 'I just dropped in to tell you I'm being married this afternoon. You know Barney, I believe. Run my first act a little later to-night, will you, Cordy? We're going up into Connecticut for dinner.'"

"Then she lit a cigarette as cool as you please. De Corda was wild with delight. He rubbed his hands and Thistle's indiscriminately."

"'Fine!' he bellowed. 'Wonderful! Glorious! And you're not leaving the show?'"

"'Leaving the show?' she drawled. 'Well, not so you could notice it. My business in life is dancing. Anything else, such as marriage'—and she looked across at Barney with a sort of devilish insolence—'is merely a little adventure on the side.'"

"Then I looked at Barney, too."

Wetherbee suddenly paused as a muttered expletive came from Town-

send across the room.

"Yes," he went on. "Knowing Barney, you can guess at his reaction to what she said. He was dead white, as if he had been struck a death blow. I knew then that he had had no idea, when they came in, of what Thistle was going to do. It had bowled him clean over."

"'Barney, old man,' I said, 'can I speak to you a minute?'"

"But Thistle was too quick for me."

"'Come along, old dear,' she said, as she caught Barney's arm. 'We have a lot to do yet;' and she steered him out of the place as if I hadn't spoken."

"I felt sick, but I decided that there was nothing more we could do, unless Barney himself took a stand on the dancing business. It was up to him now, and I prayed he would ditch the whole thing; but at four o'clock we all went to the church, to see if anything would happen. We were as nervous as cats. We sat there fidgeting and watching the clergyman, who peeped anxiously through the door at the side every few minutes."

"At half past four I drew a long breath and got up."

"'Well, fellows,' I said, 'it's evidently off, thank Heaven!'"

"Just then the outside door opened, and in came a bunch of girls all giggling and whispering, dolled up like a lot of burlesquers, and behind them—Thistle and Barney. She had on the same rose-colored affair I had seen her in earlier, and she carried no flowers. Barney must have been disappointed in that. He's the kind, you know, who would have wanted to cable South America for a fresh orchid or something."

"She sauntered in as if she got married every day in the week. She even halted Barney as they were going up the aisle to point out one of the windows to him. The whole thing somehow was too damned casual to be real—except for Barney's face."

Wetherbee stopped suddenly.

"Bill," he went on after a moment, feeling his way among his words, "I can't tell you how Barney looked as he went up to the altar. I believe that if *Sir Galahad* ever found the Holy Grail, he must have looked like that when he reached to take it. I'm saying that seriously. It's just because we all knew that Barney was made of finer clay than the rest of us that it cut so to watch that look of his, and then to see Thistle glance around at the girls behind her, stick her tongue in her cheek, and wink. I was having all I could do to keep from blubbing when Doc wrenched my arm.

"Gad, Dick!" he whispered. "This is unbearable! Can't we stop it yet?"

"But the clergyman had started, and before we knew it the thing was done. I could hear Ted beside me gritting his teeth all through the service.

"She'll play him for a sucker, that dame," he kept muttering, "and break his heart, damn her!"

"At the back of the church we all gathered around and tried to say the customary things. You know we Dodgers are about the nearest approach to relatives that Barney has. Well, anyway, we all babbled something, while Barney wrung our hands and looked at Thistle with a consuming fire in his eyes. She gave each of us a cool little stare, and then a sort of wise smile, as much as to say that she knew just what she was doing, and that none of the old stuff we were pulling could fool her. Then at last Barney handed her into his car, and they were off, with the burlesquers and us left on the sidewalk.

"It struck me then that these girls might have some useful information, so I winked to Mac and invited the bunch to dinner. The girls jumped at the chance, so we paired off and started uptown. I took a little blonde who had seemed to be intimate with Thistle. It wasn't hard to get her talking, for she was full of the thing. Wasn't it just like Thistle's darned luck, she demand-

ed, for her to land a man at the altar the second day she met him? To have met a guy who wouldn't fall for anything *but* marriage—that was the marvel, she said; and a rich one at that. I tried to discount this. I told her that Barney wouldn't be called a rich man in New York.

"Wasn't he the only heir of old John T. Vail?" she queried.

"I had to admit it. Well, then, she argued, he had enough to satisfy any girl, if he was easy with his cash; and he looked like that to her. Thistle could have everything she wanted, if she worked him right; and just trust Thistle for that!

"I slyly mentioned De Corda, and said that he would be sorry to lose Thistle.

"Lose her?" the little blonde came back. "How do you get that way? Thistle's stuck on herself in this new dance. You couldn't pry her loose from it. She's been dancing since she was fifteen. You don't catch her sitting at home evenings, watching hubby read his paper—not that lady! She'll be right where the band's playing."

"I grew more and more disgusted as she talked. When we finally got the girls fed and got rid of them, I went home; but about one o'clock Doc called me up. He and Van had sneaked into the Crystal Cup about half an hour after midnight. There was Thistle doing her act as usual, while Barney sat in front, leaning on the table, his eyes on fire, watching her. So we knew then who held the winning hand."

IV

THERE was another long pause as Wetherbee relighted his pipe. Townsend had laid his aside. He sat with his arms folded, listening silently, except for an occasional muttered exclamation or long-drawn breath.

"Well," resumed Wetherbee, "from that time on we saw very little of Barney Vail, except as we kept tab on him

in the evenings. We took turns spying until we knew that every night he sat at the Crystal Cup from eleven o'clock until two. From week to week he got thinner and more haggard, and his eyes more"—Wetherbee hesitated for a word—"naked, if you understand what I mean.

"The story had got into the newspapers—De Corda, I suppose, saw to that—and the Crystal Cup was packed every night. Every one who knew Barney or had known the family, wanted to see what it was all about, so most of the Four Hundred drifted in, while De Corda rubbed his hands and gloated. Then the tabloids all got up on their hind legs and ran pages of the most atrocious slush, with big pictures of Thistle and Barney and all sorts of lurid details. Oh, it was a mess! To Barney, with his natural fineness and reticence—well, it must have been hell; but still he stuck. It may have been a streak of stubbornness, but I prefer to think. It was a pathetic kind of hope that his presence there made the thing somehow more conventional and respectable.

"Occasionally we saw the pair of them in the daytime. Barney would call up and ask one or two of us to come over to his apartment for tea. It was always Barney who called, you understand. Thistle would be there at the tea table, wearing a heavenly frock and looking beautiful enough to mollify us all temporarily, while Barney, for the moment, would be incoherent with happiness. We never could get him with us in the evenings. He would always refuse in a tone that hit your heart.

"Along in December Doc came in one night looking worried. He'd got hold of Barney the day before, and had studied him at close range. Barney was a sick man, Doc said. His nerves were simply shot to pieces. He was smoking cigarettes one after the other for about twenty hours out of the twenty-four, and drinking, too—

which you know was new for Barney.

"Then Doc had taken his life in his hands, called up Thistle, and asked her to come to his office. I suppose curiosity got the best of her, for she went. Doc laid the facts before her pretty straight. He told her that she wasn't worth one of Barney's little fingers, and that she was killing him. He begged her to play a straight game with Barney; but he could get nothing out of her except that she had gone through the ceremony merely as a whim, and had never expected to live up to it if she didn't care to. She admitted that she had taken a lot of money from Barney, but she said sweetly that it seemed to give him pleasure to let her have it, and she was glad to do that much to please him.

"Doc said she was simply hopelessly selfish and stone cold, and he could have throttled her if it hadn't been for her devilish charm—these are Doc's words, not mine. He said she made him think of Circe; but neither she nor anybody else could ever turn Barney into a swine. All she'd do would be to turn him into a corpse.

"Doc and I raged over it half the night, and made all sorts of wild plans for abducting either or both of them; but we knew in our hearts that Doc had already done all that could be done. We knew, too, that it was Barney's darned *Galahad* complex that was responsible for the whole situation. Thistle was playing with him as a cat plays with a mouse, tantalizing him, torturing him, just because she knew he wouldn't stop her. He was a new type to her, and she was reveling in her power over him.

"At Christmas time Barney looked seedier than ever, and Thistle was parading the avenue in a gorgeous new fur coat that must have set him back five thousand at least. She was bleeding him for money, all right.

"A few days later Barney called us all up to ask us to have our New Year's Eve get-together at his apartment. He

was very much excited—very happy, evidently. He said that Thistle had suggested it. She would plan everything and then go to spend the night with her aunt, Miss MacTavish, who had just come from Scotland and was staying at an uptown hotel, so that we would have the place to ourselves. It fell on a Sunday night, so you see Barney's presence at the Crystal Cup wasn't necessary.

"The thing sounded more or less fishy to me, but the delight in Barney's voice was the main thing to think about. As I heard him plan it all I knew how terribly he had missed us and the old times together.

"Well, on Sunday night we got there about nine o'clock. Barney was radiant—more like himself than any time we'd seen him since his marriage. The apartment was all fixed up—some new furniture, and flowers everywhere—Thistle's touch, evidently. She had done herself proud about the supper, too. Everything was laid out in buffet style, so that there was no need of a servant. It was exquisitely arranged to the last detail, and of course we said all the nice things we knew about it. Barney beamed with pride, and we had a great time.

"We toasted you and the old days, and had some soul bursts generally. We sat around the table till after midnight. Then we went into the library, and we had all settled down for a real talk when there was a little scratching sound in the corner closet next the dining room. You remember the one where Barney always used to keep his golf clubs and tennis rackets? It has leaded doors with silk drapery behind them. We all looked at it, of course, when the noise continued, and we noticed that the doors were not latched. Barney got up, crossed the room, and threw them open. There was Thistle!

"She was dressed in a scarlet dancing costume, mighty scant, and she stepped out into the room as cool and insolent as you please. Barney just

stared at her with his mouth open. None of us said a word. We were all stunned, the thing was so incredibly despicable. She had been there all the time, you see, and had heard everything that was said. We had no special reason to be ashamed of our conversation, but—you know—we had talked of a lot of things that were both secret and sacred to ourselves, and there had been a few stories not exactly intended for publication. We were there as Barney's guests, and we had been betrayed by his wife. There was no use wondering how and why she had done it. The fact was, she was there.

"*'Thistle!'* Barney said finally, as if the word was shot out of him.

"She smiled at us and moved over to the center of the room.

"*'I thought it was a shame to leave you without any entertainment, when I could supply it,'* she said; *'so I decided I would stick around and do a dance for you to while away the time. Barney loves to see me dance, so here goes!'*"

Wetherbee laid aside his pipe and sat silent for a moment.

"It's hard to go on with this, but you ought to know it all if you know any. Well, Thistle danced; and, Bill, it was a dance that would have made a man blush at the Folies Bergère. To sit in your best friend's home and see his wife go through it for your entertainment—well, it wasn't a pretty sight.

"We were all looking anywhere on earth but at Barney, so we had no hint of what was coming. The first thing we knew he had made one spring across the room and caught Thistle by the throat. I can see her face this minute as it looked then—frozen in amazement, and then, slowly, a deadly fear creeping over it. Barney shook her as if she had been a rat. You know his strength. He used it all. She was a wisp in his hands.

"At first we all thought the thing would last only a minute—that Barney

had finally got to the end of his tether, and was going to give her a good lesson and even up the whole score; and every man of us was glad of it. All at once I felt Doc get tense beside me and then call out:

"'Steady, Barney—that's enough!'

"Then I saw that the girl's eyes were shut and her face a pasty white, and that Barney, instead of stopping, was wrenching her back and forth more violently than ever. His eyes were bloodshot and his teeth were set hard. Doc jumped for his arm.

"'Steady, Barney—that's enough!' he repeated. 'Let go. You're killing her, man!'

"Barney only pulled off with one hand and sent Doc sprawling back against me.

"'Kill her!' he yelled. 'I'll kill any man that stops me. This is *my* affair!'

"'Come on, fellows—rush him, all together!' shouted Doc. 'This has to be stopped!'

"We had just got up, all of us, when Barney gave her one last shake and then threw her, as he might have thrown a rat, through the doorway into the hall. Her head struck the edge of a chair, and she lay in a little heap, perfectly still.

"Doc made a spring toward the door, but Barney was too quick for him—too quick for all of us. Doc and I are featherweights, anyway, and Ted's not much better. Barney fended us all back, and then, before we could rush him again, he turned to the secretary and pulled out that little gun he used to carry in his shirt in France. You remember it? Well, he pointed it at us and smiled a terrible smile.

"'Whoever touches *that*,' he said, pointing his free hand toward Thistle, 'gets *this*! Now sit down and we'll take up our evening where it was unexpectedly interrupted.'

"He spoke with a queer intonation, like a drunken man who is trying very, very hard to pronounce his words accurately.

"'Sit down, fellows,' Doc whispered. 'Humor him. He'll drop it in a minute.'

"But Barney didn't drop it. He sat down, too, with his back to the hall, keeping us all neatly covered, while he watched us with those bloodshot eyes. Looking past him, we could see the inert heap that was Thistle. We all thought she was dead."

V

WETHERBEE stopped and wiped his forehead.

"The thing gets me again every time I think of it," he apologized. "I give you my word, Bill, nothing I went through on the other side was as unspeakable as that hour—for it *was* an hour. The clock struck one as we all sat down. It struck two before we—"

Wetherbee stopped again, but pulled himself together and went on.

"The hardest thing to make you believe is what came next. Barney began being funny. It's the truth. Without cracking a smile, he started to entertain us. I've heard a good many professional funny men in my time, but never have I heard a line as irresistibly ridiculous as the one Barney pulled that night. It was brilliant wit, too. Coming from Barney, who never pretended to tell a good story, it was uncanny. Doc explained it, later, with a lot of psychological terms, but at the time we didn't know what to make of it. For a while we sat stone sober, staring at him, and then the thing got us. We were all strung up, anyhow. All at once Ted gave a wild laugh, and then we all went off—hysterically, you know. The more we laughed, the funnier Barney got. It was ghastly, with his gun pointed at us and that heap in the hallway!

"Once Doc got up and tried to say casually:

"'Don't tell another, Barney, till I get my own cigarettes. They're in my coat.'

"It didn't work. Barney just neat-

ly clipped the lampshade beside Doc's ear and said:

"None of that, Doc! Sit down and stay there!"

"I pulled Doc down myself. You see, it wasn't ordinary cowardice that held us. We simply *couldn't* let Barney kill one of us.

"It was two o'clock, as I said, when all at once he seemed to weaken. He lowered his gun for a second, and we all jumped together. We got him easily—he didn't even struggle. He seemed suddenly to come back to himself. He looked curiously at me while I unloaded the gun and pocketed it, as if he wondered what I was doing and was too courteous to ask.

"Doc had lifted Thistle and carried her into the bedroom. I followed him. He was going over her head with his fingers, and every minute or so he listened to her heart.

"She's not dead," he said. "There's not much can be done, except stimulants and rest. No bones broken, no actual concussion—just the life shaken out of her. If she has enough vitality she'll rally; if not—"

"He sent one of the boys out for the drugs he needed, and detailed me to help him with Thistle. When he finally got her into bed, something hard inside me melted. She looked so little and broken and white! You know how a child may vex and anger you beyond endurance; but let it get hurt, and your whole strength rises to protect its weakness. Well, I felt that way when I saw the black marks all over her shoulders.

"When Barney broke away from the boys outside and came into the room, he took one look at her and then dropped down beside the bed, calling her every dear name a man knows. He would look up at us with his drawn, stricken face and moan:

"Tell me I didn't do it! Tell me I'm dreaming! You *know* I love her better than my life! I tell you I *couldn't* have done it!"

"We worked hard that night—massages, hot packs, stimulants. Doc never rested a second. I fetched and carried and—and prayed a little. I think it was partly Doc's furious energy that reacted on her—that, and the things Barney said to her, which were enough to bring any woman back from the dead.

"About six o'clock she gave a little sigh and then a moan, and opened her eyes. Barney was leaning over her. She looked up at him, and we saw her tremble.

"Your hair!" she whispered.

"It was then that Doc and I first noticed that Barney's hair had turned white."

Wetherbee stopped for a moment as he heard Townsend's sharply indrawn breath.

"After a couple of days Thistle was up and about again, very pale and still, somehow, when any of us ran in to see them, but better and out of all danger, Doc said. There was something wonderful happening between her and Barney—you could see that with half an eye. I was riding a high wave of optimism, thinking that our troubles were over for all of us, but Doc was as blue as indigo. He explained that Barney was still a mighty sick man, nervously, and that he was likely to be a lot worse before he was better.

"Any day now he'll go under," Doc prophesied.

"And he was right—Barney did go under, so far under that he almost didn't come up. He lay for six weeks like a sort of ghost, rambling and raving by turns; and it was during this time that we got to know the real Thistle."

Wetherbee suddenly snapped off the lamp at his elbow and put a fresh log on the fire. There was no light then but the fluttering flames.

"The hardest thing about retelling all this," he said slowly, "has been that I've had to describe Thistle as she seemed to all of us up to that time. In

fairness to Barney I had to show it all just as it really happened. Now, for the rest of the time, I can speak as I feel—even though I do give myself away in doing it," Wetherbee added under his breath.

"From the moment Barney was put to bed, Thistle took charge of things. There was no stopping her. She got her aunt, this Miss MacTavish, who turned out to be a real person after all, to come and stay in the house. There were enough servants for any emergency. She got a nurse to watch Barney while he slept. She nursed him herself during his every waking moment. There was no reasoning with her.

"‘This is my place,’ was all she would say.

"Doc admitted that she was better than a dozen professionals, but he told her she would kill herself. She only said gently that it didn't matter in the least. It seemed as if an entirely new personality had risen up in her. It was the one, of course, that Barney had somehow divined and loved the first time he saw her. You remember that she was the daughter, not only of a Paris dancer, but of a Scottish gentleman. She had the blood of generations of proud and gracious gentlefolk in her veins; and suddenly it was this heritage we saw, and not the other.

"She made no appeal for sympathy or forgiveness from us, offered no apology, no slightest allusion to the past. She simply was her real self, and all at once we knew that instead of being a fool, Barney had been the wisest of us all. If he only lived to enjoy what at last was his! That was our only thought.

"Little by little he came up the hill. Then I would find them sitting together, hardly speaking, only looking together, hardly speaking, only looking joy, a kind of endless contentment in their eyes. It made a man hungry just to see it.

"One day Barney told me very quietly that as soon as Doc pronounced

him ready they were going abroad for an indefinite stay. I knew it was the best thing they could do; but I knew, too, that things would seem empty when they were gone.

"They sailed two weeks ago. I went over that morning to say goodbye. When I was leaving, Thistle suddenly called me back. She was standing by the window in the sunlight, and she smiled at me as I came toward her.

"‘Dick,’ she said, ‘you know our story, Barney’s and mine; but I want you to know this, too—that from now on I am dedicated, body and soul, to making Barney happy. I am already his wife, and I hope some day to be the mother of his children.’

"She said it proudly, with her head up and the sunlight on her hair. Then she turned and slipped into Barney’s arms. She stood there with her hands on his breast, looking up at him; and in her face I saw the fire and the gentleness, the spirit and the humility, the shame and the glory of loving, all melted and fused together in a look of absolute, selfless surrender.

"I slipped out. They never noticed my going."

Wetherbee rose to his feet.

"Well, that’s the end of the story, except—"

He walked over to the mantel and leaned against it as if he were infinitely weary.

"You know, Bill, I’ve stepped out pretty lively in my time. I’ve gone the gay round with the best of them. I’ve known a lot of women in several corners of the earth, and I’ve fancied myself in love more than once. I’ve always expected to marry some time, but now—I’m not so sure; for until I find a woman who will look at me as Thistle did at Barney, I’ll wait."

There was no sound in the room except the two men’s breathing. At last the log charred and broke. There came a flutter of sparks, and then darkness.

"I’ll wait," Wetherbee repeated softly.

Lone Dog



He raised his revolver, but the shape
had vanished into the hut

By Reginald Campbell

A chapter of the adventures of Raymond Mannering, king of the Me Toom jungle—A story of murder and treachery in the wilderness of northern Siam



RAYMOND MANNERING, of the Siam Wood Company, sat on the veranda of his bungalow, munching the tinned bacon and musty eggs that served him for a meal. As he ate, his eyes occasionally traveled to the scene below him, which was one of rare beauty.

Immediately beneath the bungalow compound rolled the Me Toom River, yellow, sluggish, bordered on either side by broad white sand bars. To the right a few coconut palms denoted the beginning of the little village of Ban Huat. Elsewhere all was jungle. It

fringed the opposite bank of the river in a solid wall and lapped around the edges of Mannering's compound. Its vivid green was bathed in the early morning sun, so that the leaves glistened brightly with dew.

Yet Mannering, as he gazed thoughtfully at the verdant landscape, saw not the beauty that lay stretched before him, for he knew that somewhere within those dark jungle depths lurked murder, foul and hideous.

He pushed away his plate and was about to light a cigarette when a discreet cough sounded behind him. He turned to see the figure of one Ai Tahn

standing on the hard teak boards of the floor.

"Ai Tahn," said the white man disapprovingly, "are thy manners so bad that thou shouldst disturb the master at breakfast?"

Ai Tahn was a placid Lao gentleman who for three years had been caretaker at one of Mannering's rice depots, four miles distant in the heart of the forest. Now, however, the air of habitual tranquillity about his person was lacking, for his chest was heaving and his brown features were stained with perspiration. He held up his right arm. On it was a long, deep gash, clotted with dried blood.

Mannering drew in his breath sharply at the sight.

"Lone Dog?" he queried.

"Lone Dog, lord," answered the other. "Lone Dog is a devil indeed!"

Ai Tahn spoke the truth, for Lone Dog was a robber of no mean caliber. He was called thus because he ate, slept, robbed, and killed alone, without confederate of any kind. By day he was reputed to lie up somewhere in the black depths of the jungle that walled either bank of the Me Toom. By night he would venture forth, tigerlike, on his swift and terrible raids.

Choosing always the inhabitants of lonely shanties, he would slink in upon them from the darkness, threaten the terrified family with a large and shining knife, and decamp with the few hard-earned silver ticals they had managed to save. On two occasions resistance had been attempted, whereupon the robber had killed swiftly, silently, and efficiently, thereby adding murder to his long list of crimes.

For weeks these raids had been going on, yet still Lone Dog remained at large. Siamese police had arrived in the district, had combed the jungle without the least result, and had taken their departure, after promising to post up notices offering five hundred ticals for the capture of the robber, dead or alive. Mannering himself, aware of

the long delays inseparable from officialdom, had offered an immediate reward of a further five hundred ticals on his own behalf; but so far nothing had come of it, and now one of his own men was the outlaw's latest victim.

Mannering's face was grim as he bathed and dressed the caretaker's wound.

"And now, Ai Tahn," said he, when the man had been made as comfortable as possible, "I will hear thy story."

"Lord," began the caretaker, settling down on his hams, "have I not for three years been your servant? Wherefore have I saved certain money, and I think perhaps Lone Dog guess this and come and rob me one night. So always after dark I sprinkle dry teak leaves around the bottom of the ladder leading to my hut; also I sleep with a knife at my side. Then, last night, I hear a leaf crackle. I get up quick and look out. I see a dark form, for there was a half moon, and I know it Lone Dog from the white mask I hear he always wear. Then I wait in the dark at the top of the ladder, and he come. I think I kill him, and I strike with my knife—so."

"Ha!" breathed Mannering.

"But, lord, he jump swift as lightning, and my blow miss his heart. It strike downward and only wound him on the leg. Then he stab at me and flee, for he see I ready for him."

"And Ai Tahn wounded him for certain?"

"For certain, lord. I see him limp as he go over the clearing; also this morning I find blood leading to the edge of the forest."

The caretaker paused, and Raymond Mannering shouted for his head coolie. To his surprise it was an ordinary compound Kamoo who shortly appeared before him.

"And where is Ai Ping, the head coolie?" he snapped.

The Kamoo spread helpless hands.

"Lord," said he, "I know not. To-

day Ai Ping stay away from the compound. We go look in his hut, but he not there, and we think perhaps he run away."

"H-m! I see!" breathed Mannering thoughtfully. "Bolted, I suppose. Some damned woman at the bottom of the trouble, I'll be bound. Kamoo, get my water bottle from the boy and come with me, for I go walking with Ai Tahn."

A minute later all three were in the compound below the bungalow. There a thought struck Mannering, and, crossing over the compound, he entered a small thatched hut that stood near the edge of the jungle. This hut was his head coolie's abode.

Mannering made a thorough and efficient search of the place. Nothing incriminating was found, yet the white man's eyes were troubled as he continued his journey.

The coolie, Ai Ping—strange that he should have bolted on the very night when Lone Dog was wounded!

Mannering thought further of that coolie. A fine figure of a native he had been, and an excellent servant into the bargain, though his face had habitually worn a sullen air, and at times his work in the garden had seemed a trifle slack, especially in the morning. When reprimanded, Ai Ping had been wont to complain of fever; but, reflected Mannering, might not that fever have been nothing more than sheer fatigue?

The coolie, Ai Ping—his hut stood at the back of the company's compound, close by the fringe of jungle. He could, therefore, should he so wish, sneak out at night after his duties were over, disappear into the dark forest depths, and return before daylight without a soul being aware of his movements. Moreover, would not his post as an employee of the white man render him free from any taint of suspicion?

"Hell!" Raymond Mannering said viciously to himself.

"The lord spoke?" inquired Ai

Tahn as he followed patiently behind his master.

"He did not," declared Mannering.

The party pushed on in silence till they reached the caretaker's abode, which was set in the midst of a natural clearing in the forest. In the center of the clearing was the rice godown used for supplying coolies traveling between Mannering's bungalow and the distant railway station. Alongside it, built on tall stilts for protection against wild animals, was the caretaker's little hut.

At the edge of the clearing a small well had been sunk in the ground, to provide thirsty travelers with fresh water, and from it Mannering ordered the Kamoo to replenish his bottle with a supply of the cool, sparkling liquid. He then examined the trail of blood which led, as the caretaker had explained, from the hut to the tangled green of the jungle, where it became lost to view.

"Lord," said Ai Tahn, when his master had made a thorough inspection of the locality, "should I find Lone Dog, will the reward offered by you be mine?"

"It will," replied the white man.

"Then will I earn that reward," announced the other simply.

Mannering glanced at the jungle. It was thick, impenetrable, a veritable labyrinth, and he smiled grimly.

"May good luck attend thee, Ai Tahn, but the search will be hard."

"Master," continued the caretaker, "in some hills that are far from here lies the village where I was born. In that village my parents live, and I would fain see them before they die. It is also my wish to bring presents to them, and five hundred ticals is much money."

"It is. Ai Tahn will hunt alone?"

"He will hunt alone."

"But Lone Dog is fierce. Is not Ai Tahn afraid?"

"Lone Dog is wounded," answered the Lao placidly. "Therefore he cannot travel far. Last night I too sick

with pain to follow him, and also it very dark in the forest; but now that pain better, and I very brave. Lone Dog has caused me much hurt, and therefore will I find him!"

"Ai Tahn," said Mannering slowly, "thou knowest Ai Ping, my head coolie?"

The caretaker nodded.

"Thou hast heard that last night he bolted, and my house has seen him no more?"

"Lord, I heard the Kamoo tell you this."

"Does not Ai Tahn think that a certain coincidence is strange?"

"Master, he thinks it strange," repeated the caretaker in even tones.

II

FOUR days later Raymond Mannering was walking listlessly back to his bungalow in the mellowing light of the evening. Together with some of his most trustworthy coolies, he had scoured the jungle for miles around in a vain search for Lone Dog; and as he climbed up the stairs of his dwelling his mind was sick with weariness and failure.

He was about to sink exhausted into a long rattan chair, when to his surprise the figure of Ai Tahn appeared from the back veranda and salaamed profoundly.

"The lord has returned?" the Lao asked, somewhat unnecessarily.

"He has," snapped Mannering, "and nought can I find of the lair of Lone Dog. Has Ai Tahn had better fortune?"

"Lord, he has," replied the other placidly.

The weariness fled from the white man, and he stiffened up, every nerve on the alert.

"Ah!" was all that he said.

"Master," Ai Tahn went on, "I look hard, even as you look hard. Then this afternoon I find a thick clump of bamboo one mile from my home. In it I see a concealed hut, and I listen.

Soon I hear some one moving. Then I run quick to your bungalow, but you away in the forest, so I stay here till you return."

"And you saw not the man himself?"

"Lord, I did not wait. Assuredly that man an evil man, I think, else why should he hide?"

"Why, indeed?" said Mannering grimly. "And now will we, together with some fresh coolies, go straight to this bamboo clump."

Ai Tahn coughed discreetly.

"I have thought that perhaps Lone Dog, before he dies, might kill master. Then where would Ai Tahn be in the matter of the promised reward?"

Mannering's thin lips curved into a smile. Crossing over to his safe, he took out the sum of five hundred ticals in treasury notes and placed it in the breast pocket of his jungle tunic.

"Should the man prove to be Lone Dog, then will I pay thee thy reward to-night. As for the master being killed, the master is accustomed to look after himself."

"As the lord wills," said Ai Tahn meekly.

"And now," said Mannering, striding down the stairs, "we will see what luck attends us on this venture!"

An hour later the party had arrived, absolutely without sound, at the outskirts of the clump of bamboo indicated by Ai Tahn. The weather being now at its hottest, the bamboo, dry as tinder, had drooped earthward so as to form a veritable network of stems. Through them Mannering peered cautiously, to make out a small banana-leaf shanty built cunningly in their midst.

He listened intently for awhile, but no sound came from within the tangle. Finally he slipped down the safety catch of his revolver and pointed it straight at the hiding place.

"Come on out of that!" Mannering's words, sharp and clear, rang

through the quiet jungle. "Else will I shoot, and shoot to kill!"

A pregnant silence followed. Then a faint rustle came from the clump, and a moment later a bronzed form crept on all fours out of the shelter. It raised itself painfully upright, and Mannering saw that its left leg was swathed in a leaf bandage. The last rays of the setting sun shone fully on its harsh, sullen features as it faced, without flinching, the white man's revolver.

"Ai Ping," said Mannering icily, as he saw the figure of his late head coolie standing before him, "instead of thy month's wages, prison and then death await thee!"

Ai Ping looked round him fearlessly. He saw Mannering, hard, lean, merciless; he saw the four coolies armed with knives; and, lastly, he saw Ai Tahn, the caretaker.

"Not Ai Ping, lord," he said after a pause, "but Lone Dog, and Lone Dog dies not in captivity!"

And his hand flew to his mouth.

III

MANNERING bent and scrutinized the motionless body. The limbs were stiff and the eyeballs staring. The white man stood upright again with a sharp intake of the breath.

"Not for nothing does Lone Dog know of the poisons of the jungle," remarked Ai Tahn calmly, as he gazed at the quiet form.

Mannering turned to his coolies.

"Carry the body out of the clump, and then build a stretcher," he ordered sharply, for he was in mind to have the remains taken to Ban Huat, there to await inspection by the police.

The coolies hurriedly set about their task. As they fashioned a roughly made stretcher of bamboo, the caretaker touched Mannering respectfully on the arm.

"Lord, in the matter of the reward—"

The white man took the notes out

of his pocket, counted them carefully, and placed them in the outstretched palm. Ai Tahn's white teeth flashed as the money disappeared somewhere on his dusky person.

"My parents will indeed be pleased," he said. "With this can be bought two pigs, a buffalo, and perhaps even—"

The speaker paused. Then his jaw dropped in amazement, and he stared before him with a look of horror.

"Meh!" he exclaimed a second later. "Can dead men walk?"

It appeared that they could, for Lone Dog, seizing an opportune moment when the coolies were busy hacking down bamboo with their knives, had vanished into space with well-nigh incredible swiftness.

"Scatter and after him!" cried Mannering. "With that wound he can't have gone far."

For a full half hour the party fought their way desperately through the tangled jungle mazes, and then, as the light was failing rapidly, the white man called his coolies together and ordered an immediate return to Ban Huat.

"Lord," said Ai Tahn, "I go back to my home in the forest, since to search further in the dark is mere foolishness; but in the matter of the reward—may I keep it, master? Was it my fault that Lone Dog escaped by feigning death?"

"You may keep it," answered Mannering shortly, and his face was grim as he strode down the path toward his distant bungalow.

When halfway there, however, he did a strange thing. He ordered his coolies to go on to Ban Huat, but he himself turned on his heel and began to push swiftly back in the direction of the caretaker's abode.

He had reasoned rapidly. He remembered the manner in which Lone Dog had glanced at Ai Tahn. It had been a nasty glance, very nasty indeed, and seemed to bode ill for that benign

Lao gentleman. First Ai Tahn had wounded the robber, and then, not content with that, he had ferreted out Lone Dog's lair and betrayed him to his enemies. For this, reflected Mannering, the outlaw would in all probability seek immediate and terrible vengeance, injured though he was.

The thought lent wings to Mannering's feet as he sped through the gloom, but it was not until the moon was rising that he reached the edge of the caretaker's clearing. Once there, he lay flat in some reeds which would hide him completely from any newcomer, and then, revolver in hand, settled down to watch.

Before him lay the clearing, in the center of which was Ai Tahn's hut. From inside the hut a faint light flickered, which told Mannering that the caretaker was at home and probably cooking his evening meal. All around the open space rose the forest, lit in eerie fashion by the pale rays of the moon. The trees were white as specters, and no wind stirred their gaunt branches. They towered somberly over the arena in a grim, cold silence.

Then, suddenly, they began to whisper as a wind sprang up from the west, and simultaneously a thick cloud obscured the moon. The spectral light fled, and complete darkness enveloped the earth.

For what seemed hours the thick darkness remained. Then the white light gradually broadened till the moon shone full again. Mannering strained his eyes across the clearing once more, and as the hut became visible the breath caught in his throat. A black form had reached the top of the ladder and was even now disappearing from sight. He raised his revolver, but the shape had vanished into the hut. Lone Dog had timed his entry well.

The white man leaped to his feet and ran with all his might across the moon-splashed clearing.

"Ai Tahn!" he shouted. "Have a care, have a care! The robber—"

He reached the foot of the ladder. As he did so, there sounded from within the shanty a sharp cry, followed by the thud of a heavy body falling. Like one possessed, Mannering tore up the ladder. A black figure loomed up above him. He pointed his revolver at it.

"Lord," said Ai Tahn placidly, "have no fear. I was ready for Lone Dog. I have killed him, and he is very dead indeed this time."

It needed no very thorough examination to tell Mannering that Ai Ping was undoubtedly dead, stabbed by Ai Tahn's great jungle knife.

As the white man glanced round the hut, lit by the fitful sputter of a grease lantern, a sudden chill went through his heart. At his feet lay the dead body, its features contorted in a ghastly grin. Outside brooded the grim forest, lit by the pale light of the moon. Death and loneliness and horror lay like a pall over the little jungle clearing.

Fear caught Mannering with icy hands, but with a supreme effort he shook it off, only to find a great weariness descending on him. For four whole days he had been tracking through the forest with but little food and rest, and he felt that he had reached the limit of his powers. His knees began to weaken, and he sank down upon the split bamboo flooring and hid his face in his hands.

"The master is ill?" asked Ai Tahn anxiously.

"Water, Ai Tahn!" he gasped.

The caretaker stooped and handed his master a ladleful of water from a jar of porous earthenware.

Mannering took one sip, then threw the ladle away in disgust.

"This is warm. Go to the well and get me some fresh water!"

Ai Tahn, taking the jar with him, obediently climbed down the ladder and crossed the clearing to where the little well had been sunk in the ground.

There he cooled the jar, and in two minutes' time returned to the hut with some fresh, sparkling water, which he gave to his master.

Mannering drank deeply, then drew a shaking hand across his brow and rose to his feet.

"The lord is better?" inquired Ai Tahn in courteous fashion.

"He is better."

"Lord," said the other after a pause, "as I have killed Lone Dog, it would appear that the reward of the police, if they give it, is mine also."

"It would appear so," agreed Mannering.

"Master, as I have told you, in the hills my parents live, and I would fain give them presents before they die. Therefore would I like to leave your service. Master, when the reward is paid me, may I go?"

Mannering looked at the native, and his eyes were cold and hard.

"Lone Dog," he said softly, very softly, "thou can go, and thou goest now to the hell that awaits thee!"

And he shot Ai Tahn, caretaker, robber, and murderer, three times through the heart.

IV

THREE days later a European police officer, summoned posthaste to Ban Huat, was bending over the dead body of Ai Tahn.

"I am sorry," explained Mannering, "that I took somewhat drastic action, but I was alone with a man who was more devil than human being."

"Don't worry," said the officer. "Go on. How did you first come to suspect him?"

"It was not until I was in the hut alone with Ai Tahn and the dead coolie, Ai Ping. Then—but how, God knows!—I felt as if I were in the presence of something inexpressibly evil, and a sudden horror and loathing of Ai Tahn came over me. I made an excuse to get him out of the hut, and when he had gone I took a quick look

between the split bamboo flooring. The natives have a trick of hiding their cash there, you know."

"I wasn't born yesterday," grunted the officer.

"Between the flooring," continued Mannering, "were rows and rows of silver ticals, amounting to a sum that Ai Tahn couldn't possibly have saved from his wages as caretaker. Then I tore the bandage off Ai Ping's leg, and found only the slightest of wounds. I had just finished that when Ai Tahn returned. He talked to me, and as he talked my brain worked like lightning. God, how quickly the brain *can* work at times! I remembered how Lone Dog had always stolen silver ticals; I remembered how keen Ai Tahn was on getting my cash that very night, and now here he was, saying he wanted to clear off the moment he received the reward offered by the police. That made me doubly suspicious; and once I doubted him the mask seemed to fall off his face. The placid Lao, the benign middle-aged gentleman was there no longer. Instead, a devil was looking at me, so—I shot him!"

The police officer scribbled a few notes.

"And the coolie, Ai Ping," he remarked after awhile. "How do you reckon he came into the business?"

"I've thought it all out," said Mannering slowly, "and I guess things happened like this. Friend Ping, on hearing of the reward offered by me, probably did a bit of amateur detective work after dark, with the result that he came to suspect Ai Tahn. On the night he bolted from me I expect he surprised the robber in the forest, and the two men fought, each wounding the other slightly. It was then that Ai Tahn had a brilliant idea, and the two agreed to chuck the quarrel and join forces instead."

"Blessed if I can understand what you're driving at, Mannering," said the other thoughtfully.

"God, man, can't you see it all?"

Can't you see 'em, both wounded, glaring at each other, hating each other, yet *fearing* each other?"

"H-m! Go on. This interests me."

"Can't you understand Lone Dog's lightning brain, and his scheme? He probably offered to be friends with Ai Ping, and made him a proposal. He would share the spoil—doubtless exaggerated—that he already had in his hut, and the reward offered by me, if they made a put-up show between them. Then they would bolt. Think of the cleverness of it! What was Ai Ping to do? Even supposing he collared Ai Tahn, he would receive the reward and nothing else, while if he agreed to the scheme he'd get my reward and all of Ai Tahn's loot."

"Why all of it?"

Mannerling made a gesture of impatience.

"Do you think that after their final meeting, when my reward had been paid to Ai Tahn, either would have been content with only half the money? Rot, man! Each would have been out

to kill the other, and the survivor would have bolted with the whole bag of tricks."

"You should have been one of us," said the police officer. Then he gazed long and earnestly at the dead face of Ai Tahn. "Ten years ago," he went on after a pause, "that man was the worst criminal in Bangkok. Killed two policemen there once, and a reward of a thousand ticals was put on his head. Now how long had he been with you, Mannerling? Three years? Jove, he laid low, though he came back to his tricks in the long run. These fellows always do. Well"—the officer glanced up at his companion—"guess that first reward still stands, so that's fifteen hundred ticals for you altogether, Mannerling. You always were a lucky devil!"

It was the leper hospital of northern Siam, however, which proved lucky in that, some few months later, it received a large sum of money from an unknown source. The donor, it seemed, wished to remain strictly anonymous.

The February MUNSEY Will Feature

"The Greatest Golf Player of All Time"

By GEORGE TREVOR

Author of "The Greatest Football Player of All Time," etc.

Southern and California Links Will Be
Crowded Next Month, and Hardy North-
ern Players May Be Inspired to Drive
the Red Ball Over a Snowy Course



Tiger Love

A serial—Part two—A modern girl hears the primitive mating call and flings her gauntlet into the face of society—Then outraged convention bares its sharp fangs

By Robert Terry Shannon

THUS BEGAN THE STORY



REBELLING against the shams of the ultra-sophisticated social set in which she lived, Marilyn Mercer became engaged to Tom Fuller in the hope that he would help her to find "something different."

But Marilyn was twenty, while Tom

was thirty, and her desire for thrills conflicted with his cautious solicitude.

While driving on a dark, lonely road they met two highwaymen who took Tom's watch, money, and automobile. Jeffrey Granger, motoring late that night, found the couple immediately after the robbery and offered to take them in pursuit. But Tom protested that the thugs were armed, and, because he insisted upon first telephoning



When men yield to a
primal urge

for help, Marilyn alone went with the stranger.

Jeffrey, a big game hunter and gentleman adventurer, overtook the bandits, shot one and then hurled the other against a rock with the savagery of a tiger. Leaving Tom's car in a ditch, Granger bundled Marilyn into his own and took her to his home.

The girl was fascinated by the trophies which adorned his living room, but most of all she exulted in his sense of mastery. Jeffrey was cultured, yet primitive—a man who took what he wanted, in defiance of civilized conventions.

Here, at last, was a wild, fierce thrill—being alone with a tiger man in his lair! Marilyn surrendered to his superior will, and their lips had barely met in a kiss when Tom burst in, breaking the spell.

The girl went away with Tom, but Jeffrey had captured her imagination, and she determined to see him again at the earliest possible moment.

This moment came at a country club dance. They slipped out for a canoe ride and rested on a little island. Then, discovering that Jeffrey's passion had nothing to do with marriage, Marilyn called him a beast, leaped into the canoe and left him marooned.

Back on the dance floor she was boasting to Tom how she had "trimmed the tiger's claws," when Jeffrey, dripping wet, appeared. He had swum ashore.

Later, while motoring with Marilyn, "the tiger" stopped in a lane and demanded a show-down. The girl treated his advances coolly.

Her interest in Jeffrey was at a low ebb when Tom, ignorant of feminine

perversity, made a tactical error by describing him as a loose character.

"You know, Tom," the girl said, "every time I begin to get fed up on Mr. Granger, you start interesting me in him all over again."

Jeffrey had turned to Helen, a friend of Marilyn's, which inflamed Marilyn's jealousy — particularly when Helen went to a *bal masque*, garbed as a leopardess. The costume apparently made a hit with Granger, for he arranged to take her on a week-end trip to Atlantic City.

Marilyn discovered the plan, however, routed her rival, and hurried to the trysting place to upbraid Jeffrey. Brazenly admitting he had used Helen only as a decoy, he dragged Marilyn into his car and drove off, hotly pursued by Tom and Helen in Tom's car.

CHAPTER IX

A TRAGIC JOY-RIDE



JEFFREY GRANGER'S motor car swung into the main highway and hit up speed, but carefully. It was a region of road houses, private parties, and shore dinners. The road was comparatively crowded. The hour was nearly midnight, when petting parties were passing beyond the silly flirtation stage. Jeffrey really couldn't let out speed yet.

Behind, Tom Fuller was actually taking chances.

He was gaining!

Marilyn, snuggled closely to Mr. Granger, experienced a tingle of exultation. The age-old thrill of the woman pursued!

"Pillar of respectability chases love bandit," chuckled Jeffrey, whose primitive instincts and graceful mastery suggested a tiger. "The man who doesn't care about his pocketbook feels that the coin of the heart must be defended."

The girl's eyes sparkled at the ref-

erence to a pocketbook. Jeffrey had been an avenging hero the night Tom meekly turned his money over to the two highwaymen on a dark, lonely road.

But now he was showing real spunk. His car continued to gain. Mr. Granger flashed a look around.

"My God, how he must love you! I bet he never drove that way before."

Marilyn, fascinated, stared at the onrushing machine.

"He isn't driving that way now, either," she said after a moment. "It's that little fool tight kid who's going like the devil. I might have known it wasn't Tom," she added in withering contempt.

The traffic thinned out on the road. Mr. Granger began to step a little more firmly on the gas.

Bit by bit the speedometer hand edged around until it reached the point where the car ahead was holding its own. Mile after mile passed. It neither gained nor was gained on.

Imperceptibly, except for the speedometer hand, the speed mounted. Bit by bit the distance between the two cars broadened. Every minute or two Marilyn looked backward. Steadily the other car was dropping behind.

They hit a curve, swerved and were just topping a hill when Fuller's car rounded the bend. It was a last glimpse she had of them.

They climbed another hill, and passed it without the other's headlights coming into sight. The road wiggled on through a succession of curves. Marilyn could barely tell when her companion diminished speed or increased it. He was really driving now. Then suddenly something startling happened.

A shrill whistle cut commandingly through the night after them.

"Holy mum jumbo! It's a speed cop!"

She looked back and saw the State policeman twist his motor cycle in the direction after them and put on gas.

"Stop! I can fix him up."

"Fat chance. You're playing no more tricks on me. I wouldn't be surprised if you handed me over to him on a charge of abducting you."

"Well, isn't that what you're doing?"

"Sure. And we're sticking together this night, my lady."

Putt, putt, putt!

The officer was swooping down after them like an airplane. They ducked round a curve, over and behind a hill, another curve, and Jeffrey shot into a side road in a cloud of dust. The car was swerving dangerously now.

He clipped off the lights, and swished on through the darkness. He could see in the dark like a cat.

It was uphill and down dale in truth now. There was no sign of the policeman behind them. But Granger kept on, still without lights, save the moon's. Curves, grades, descent. Sometimes hardly touching the dirt road.

And then it happened!

A huge, shapeless form, blocking the whole road, loomed up dead ahead and on top of them. Marilyn screamed.

All Jeffrey's seeming ease of driving crystallized into desperate activity.

He did more things at once than she had ever seen anybody do.

He jammed the wheel round; turned on the lights; just missed the impending object that dwindled into a stalled cow. The car leaped a ditch. It hit a fence, just right, where there was but one cross rail instead of the usual three.

"Duck!" he yelled.

She threw herself on the floor, cramped and quivering. There was a crash, and a shower of glass, and a rip of metal and rotted wood. It all came to a climax on a thud. Without seeing him, she felt Jeffrey begin to sag.

She reached out to stop the car, but awkwardly jammed down as she was, it grinded to a halt before she could touch key or brakes.

The car was in neutral. The emer-

gency brake was wrenched back to its limit. Granger's foot was rigidly jammed on the service brake. The ignition was turned off.

Behind the wheel slumped a limp body which had been such a live man an instant before.

A dark trickle oozed down from Jeffrey's hair across his forehead. Marilyn started to scream, but choked it off. She was half out of the car, about to dart away. She forced herself back. A terrible repugnance to blood nauseated her. Afraid to touch him. No, no! It was not that. She didn't like blood.

But the girl conquered her fear to the extent of shifting over the body, alive or dead. His limpness crucified her. Marilyn was more ghastly afraid than she had ever dreamed it possible for a human being to be. She didn't dare to think.

She tried the engine; thank God, it responded! She wouldn't have known what to do, beyond turning the key and stepping on the starter. She had trouble loosening the emergency brake. But a more terrible trouble gave her abnormal strength.

The girl started to turn out of the field. It was rough pasture. She tried hard to be careful. It hurt her soul to see him jolted.

"Don't think! Don't think!" she cried to herself. "Just do—do, do!"

A little ditch—it was such a little ditch after all—opened portentously under her. But she eased over it, and was on the road.

The outraged cow, apparently unhurt, sent an indignant moo after her. Jeffrey hadn't moved.

My God, what to do—of course, the nearest house!

She reached it. It was dark. Only a square bulk silhouetted unsympathetically against a star-dotted sky.

She leaped out, and banged frantically on the door.

A window was raised; a sleepy voice called down irritably from above:

"What's wrong?"

"Come down! Let me in! There's been an accident! A man's hurt!"

"What man?"

"Come down! How dare you ask questions at this time!"

Leadened, dragging, interminable seconds. Little reaching fingers of flickering candlelight. Scraping feet. The creaky noise of an opening door. A suspicious crack, a sharp, curious face.

Marilyn saw a man in a nightgown. The absurd thought came to her that she had never seen a man in a nightgown before. He was tucking pants over. Others appeared behind him—all in nightgowns. A house, a lonely house, on a side road was awakening to activity.

They carried Jeffrey in. He stirred once, emitting a faint sound that was not, however, a groan.

Thank God, he moved! Thank God, there was a telephone! Nightgowns, yes—but telephone, too.

Marilyn found she was nearer home than she had thought, and called her family physician. He would come at once.

They tried to revive Jeffrey, but he didn't recover consciousness. These were the most terrible moments of her life. She never knew she could suffer like this.

The physician came. There was a slight concussion and a dislocated shoulder.

Can he be moved?

Yes, if he is moved carefully.

Then let's take him to my home. We must get him out of this terrible place—thank you, thank you, good people. Nightgowns and all.

Through all the pain of that night there was nevertheless an unmistakable, if faint, sense of triumph as Jeffrey was brought through her door. It increased as he was borne upstairs and laid gently onto her bed.

She insisted upon yielding her boudoir to the man who had fascinated

her. She herself slept in a spare bedroom a little way down the hall.

CHAPTER X

THE TIGER REFUSES TO BE TAMED



UNLIGHT was making the room gay. Jeffrey Granger was still sleeping. That was another thing Marilyn had learned—how different, how reassuring, and sweet and warm and true, sleep, just simple sleep, is compared to the thing which is like it, but so different. The thing she had watched in him when he was knocked out.

She had always thought her room cozy, but now had a tremendous yearning to make it even cozier. The instinct, of course, to throw a silken net around him, to bind him in unbreakable strands of femininity.

She saw her own motives quite clearly. She felt she wasn't playing quite fair—but then what woman ever did?

Jeffrey opened his eyes. For a long time he stared at the ceiling. A little liquid puddle of light played softly there. He watched it. Marilyn did not move. After a time his eyes found hers. Then they moved away again. Roved over the room. There was a puzzled look in them.

Once or twice he twitched uneasily. He was sensing her thoughts; sensing danger. He was out of place, strange. To see her and yet not be strong enough to fight back! The silken net was drawing in upon him, tighter, tighter.

The patient turned over and moaned softly, muttering something. She leaned forward eagerly.

"What did you say?"

"That damned cow! It was a cow, wasn't it?"

"Oh—yes."

"I spent most of my life potting lions, tigers, men, and then I come a cropper on a damned cow."

"And how!" said Marilyn.

"There is some kind of symbol or moral about it."

"I think so, too."

"And I don't like it—it gives me the shivers."

"Why?"

"Well, a cow is so damned domestic."

"Don't they catch tigers by tying a cow up somewhere and waiting for him to come to it?"

"Yes," Jeffrey agreed thoughtfully, "but this cow wasn't even tied."

He let his eyes rove around the room again.

"I don't like this place," he remarked, after a long pause.

"I think it's very pretty, myself," the girl responded.

"It does something queer to me that I don't like," Jeffrey turned over on his side abruptly and looked straight at her.

"Let me tell you something, young lady," he said definitely, "I am still a long way from being tied and shackled."

Marilyn got up with a start and left the room. She stayed out until he began querulously to call for her; even then she let him wait a little longer. It was quite a delicious feeling to have him call for her. Then, suddenly, she felt panic-stricken and guilty. Perhaps he needed help. She fairly flew back to the room.

The most dangerous instinct of all had awakened in her—the maternal instinct. There are so many instincts in a woman where a man is concerned. The instinct to flee. To be pursued. To combat and to allure. To tame and to excite. But the instinct to protect and mother and serve is the most deceptive of them all, and includes all the rest.

Jeffrey was beginning to sense what was happening to both of them, and was fighting it.

"Listen here, lady, just hold your babying impulse in check, will you, and give a stricken hunter an even break?"

"I don't know what you mean," she lied.

"My God! Before you start looking at me again like that, do you mind going to my house and getting me a gun, so I can put a bullet through my head?"

She was in hot water with both Helen and Tom. They were the only things beating upon her peace of mind. Yet they were trivial matters. Tom was easily enough placated. After all, he had a certain sense of victory, feeling that Jeffrey had got his.

Helen was angrier because Marilyn had been in at the kill, so to speak, than because she had been defrauded of a trip to a hotel with a man. In fact, in her fickle little heart of hearts, the child was considerably relieved when she woke up the next morning in her own home, sober.

Other tongues, however, began to buzz around Marilyn. She knew it by the expressive silences which fell upon little groups when she suddenly came upon them. She knew it by the oblique glances other women threw at her. She knew it by the sixth and seventh senses which every woman has.

Even her father had become affected by the problem of Jeffrey, but she did not care. Nothing mattered save that she had him—had him in her own home, in her own room, in her own bed.

On the surface, Mr. Mercer still got along famously with the patient. Marilyn felt, however, that he was not so much distressed at the young man's accident, as indignant at the danger in which Jeffrey had placed his daughter. After all, it might have been Marilyn lying there.

But that did not matter, either. The girl never thought of that really. She was not interested in what might have been, or any probabilities. She was interested only in facts. The fact was that Mr. Jeffrey Granger was hers. That she had him. That she had him

in her home; in her room; in her bed.

"Do me a favor," Jeffrey complained. "Keep your father out of here, will you?"

"Why?" Marilyn tried to look surprised. "I thought you liked him."

"Yes—but—he makes it all look so damned respectable and domestic."

"Why do you fight so hard against civilization?"

"Because I don't believe in it."

"But, after all, it is civilization."

"Well, what is?"

"Common sense, safety, police—"

"Listen to the little fool's explanation. She couples police and safety. If it hadn't been for the police, we'd have been safe in Atlantic City."

She let herself dwell on that thought a moment, with no little regret.

"Anyhow," she resumed, "common sense, safety, police, caution, and all the other sheep dog and tabby cat virtues break the tiger and conquer the wild. You'll have a tough time whipping civilization."

"How thick do you think this civilization of yours is over the wild?"

"Thick enough to cover the tiger. Strong enough to train an elephant. Hard enough to—"

"Listen to the female. Talk—talk—talk!"

He sat up. "I tell you, I don't like this place. I want to go home."

"You're not strong enough yet."

Marilyn's eyes twinkled victoriously. Her patient fell back and closed his eyes.

"Go away and let me sleep. I want to get back my strength in a hurry."

She crossed swiftly, noiselessly to the bed, leaned over and kissed him on the lips, then sprang back.

"Coward," she said, and made a face at him from the door.

The wounded man rubbed his lips furiously with his hand.

"Of all the dirty tricks," he fumed.

He took to sleep as a defense. Whenever she came in, he feigned slumber. Marilyn sat and looked at her involun-

tary guest. Then she would close her own eyes in order to see him more distinctly.

That night she lay in bed, gradually tensing; her chest softly rising and falling; her limbs rigid, as a picture of the man asleep in her own room, at the other end of the hallway, grew ever clearer in her mind.

That trick he had of drawing his firm, sensuous lips over his strong, white teeth, had branded itself upon her memory. Yet there was strength in the lines of his mouth, too, not just wantonness. She remembered noticing that most distinctly when he had lain so utterly relaxed that not the remotest possibility of pose remained.

She fell asleep with a dreamy picture of those lips upon hers, and her whole being was filled with unspeakable peace.

CHAPTER XI

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS



MARILYN lay on her elbow, looking out the window. A bird was chirping a morning valedictory to summer. There was already an autumn tang in the air.

She raised her head and looked out, across the garden, to the sea. Over night, almost, it had grown into a deeper blue with cool underlying greens. She moved as if with a motion of nestling closer to herself.

"Yes, that's it, I'm so happy!" she whispered aloud.

Peace—somehow she had never before savored such peace.

What now?

Deep inside her, she *knew*. Deep inside, where lay curled, tender and warm, the assurance that an event long delayed and long awaited, was at last hurrying to a conclusion.

A cloud floated over the sea. A shadow moved ponderously out of the sea, across the beach, the lawn and gar-

den and over her bed.

It struck a sudden chill into her. She jumped from the bed. Panic, sheer panic, drove her out into the hallway.

She raced along the hall, into *his* room. She did not knock, something told her she did not have to. Sunlight was pouring into his room. No, not his room, *her* room! It was all hers again.

The bed was empty. The room was empty. Cruel sunlight revealed the emptiness, and suddenly all of life seemed utterly futile.

Marilyn gave a little cry and sagged against the door. Sunlight turned black. She tried to straighten herself. With hand outstretched she tottered to the bed. She sank down on the tell-tale indentations which marked where he had lain. Her face pressed the pillow, and she sobbed.

Providence, which had been so lavish in the bestowal of gifts on Marilyn, had been singularly niggard in her allotment of tears.

In the very middle of a sob she began to go berserk.

"I hope the damned fool breaks his neck and dies on the road," she snarled. "It would serve him right."

This idea flung her into a tantrum. Marilyn was good at tantrums. She had the kind of heels that were made to be kicked up. In fact, she made such an enchanting picture of flashing pyjama legs and delicate ankles, that Jeffrey would probably have appreciated her more at that moment, more than ever before.

"Oh, I wish I had him here, just for one minute!"

The sound of her own voice began to bring the girl to her senses. Gradually she subsided out of her fit. Unconsciously she put her arm around the pillow and nestled a cheek against it. Thoughts, more or less sane, seeped into her distracted brain.

She looked up and out of the window. There was always a certain amount of counsel to be had if one

only looked far enough. Distance was really quite a good guide.

After all, running away was the supreme compliment he could have paid her. You know, the fellow who said "men flee and women pursue," wasn't such a fool at that.

Marilyn turned on her back and shifted her body up, so that she rested against a pillow and the wall. She crossed her knees and swung her leg and considered the ceiling.

Very well, then, she would go in for hunting in a serious way. Once she had formulated this determination to herself, she had to laugh aloud. Picture of a young girl's mind when the man of her choice has flown.

She started. Man of her choice. Was he the man of her choice? Did she really *love* him?

Honestly, this was absolutely a new angle. She didn't know. She tried to think it out, but it was one of those things that *couldn't* be thought out. She tried to calculate her own feelings, but this is one of those things about which there didn't seem to be any feeling a girl could come to any conclusion about.

She shut her eyes tightly, and again came that picture of him which had haunted her as she had gone to sleep.

Lips drawn back from strong white teeth. Eyes glowing with a tigerish desire of something older than humanity. The lock of black hair that had slipped down over one temple. Hair like the night, hair one wanted to lose one's fingers in. Muscles dancing a tiny rhythmic dance under a clinging wet sleeve. A hollow of smooth bronze skin between chin and shoulder, into which one could nuzzle so deliciously.

She sprang back, a little frightened, altogether sobered. She was really *aware* for the first time. Aware of all that magical interplay between man and woman that had, after all, so little to do with the things people think are important. That was beyond, above—

or beneath, if you will—marriage, clergy, family, vows, respectability, law—oh, anything you chose to name it.

Marilyn grew up that morning. Somehow she passed the threshold dividing girlhood from womanhood, in the passage leading from a tantrum to self-knowledge.

She had become inoculated with Jeffrey's philosophy. She didn't know whether she loved him. It wasn't even important. She was astonished, a bit confused. The veil of the temple was rent in twain and her old gods were tumbling!

CHAPTER XII

EVE ENTERS THE GARDEN OF EDEN



MARILYN went back to the spare bedroom and dressed slowly, deliberating the while. Then she strolled into the garden and thought things out still further.

Finally, it occurred to her to ascertain if Jeffrey had reached his home safely. A little stabbing doubt entered her mind whether he had actually gone home. There was no telling what that man might do. After all, he was still not himself. She had forgotten that under the pressure of her own problem.

She flew to the telephone and called his house. The Oriental answered

"Has your master returned?"

"Velly much."

"How is he?"

"Velly much."

"What?"

"Velly much."

"You listen to me. I want to know exactly how Mr. Granger is."

"Velly much."

"Are you trying to be impertinent?"

"Velly much," said the Oriental, in exactly the same voice, and hung up.

Marilyn banged down the phone, red with anger, and stood for a moment staring at it. She whirled abruptly and began packing a bag. Halfway

through, she paused. After all, convention still had its grip upon her. She had not quite the courage for such a flagrant gesture.

She ordered something to eat—less to eat than to think, and lingered over a few mouthfuls, trying to plan, but a definite scheme refused to come. She arose, put on her make-up with special care, and went out to the garage. A few moments later she was on the road to Jeffrey's house.

Another car was standing before the door when she arrived. As she alighted, a man with a little black bag, apparently a doctor, came down the steps. She met him quickly.

"I beg your pardon, I am Miss Mercer. I have seen you before, but don't remember your name. What is the matter with Mr. Granger?"

The man looked at her curiously.

"I am Dr. Wilkes," he said. "Mr. Granger was in an accident recently, and last night, very foolishly, went out. He fell and jolted his bad shoulder again."

"Doctor!" She gripped his arm. "Is it serious?"

"Not serious, but painful, I should imagine, although it is hard to get anything out of that man."

Marilyn flew up the steps.

"You know," the doctor called after her with a peculiar inflection, "what he needs most of all is complete rest. I don't think it advisable—"

But she was already ringing the bell. The physician shrugged his shoulders and got into his automobile.

Just as he moved away the door opened.

It nearly closed completely again the moment the Oriental saw Marilyn. She pressed against it.

"I want to see your master."

"No can see."

The servant blocked the doorway with a rooted impersonal patience. She stared at him wrathfully.

"I tell you, I must see Mr. Granger."

"No can see," he repeated.

The wild thought came to her to push, to strike the man aside, but she sensibly abandoned it. There was something about his easy unconcern that was adamant, even dangerous.

"Jeffrey!" she called into the house loudly.

Only silence answered. It seemed to her the shadow of a smile or a jeer crossed the Oriental's face.

"Jeffrey!" she called again; once more the silence beat back on her.

Turning abruptly, she ran down the steps, humiliated to the depths of her being. The tiger had taken this man into his confidence in a conspiracy to exclude her.

"If you think you can get away with this, Jeffrey Granger," she said savagely to herself, "you've got a big surprise in store for yourself."

Marilyn got into her car and drove out to the road. About a mile on she stopped and sat there nearly an hour, thinking the thing out.

What to do?

At last she found it.

Driving back to her home, the girl finished packing her bag. Then she wrote a note to her father, saying in the flippant, casual manner to which she had accustomed him, that she was going for a visit.

Later she drove roundabout toward Granger's house, stopped the car in a bend of the road just beyond, locked it and walked to the nearest garage. She called out one of the mechanics and drew him aside.

"I want you to telephone a message," she said, pulling out a five-dollar bill. "Come across to that drug store with me and I'll tell you what to say."

She explained carefully:

"Call this number and ask for Mr. Granger. Insist upon speaking to Mr. Granger personally. Tell him this is the post office, and a package, stamped with African stamps, is waiting for him. Tell him the package has been damaged, and evidently contains something which cannot be sent out in the

regular channels. It must be called for personally, and at once. Is that clear?"

The man nodded and grinned.

"Sure, but where do I get off if I'm caught forging the voice of the United States Post Office?"

"You won't be caught. And even if you are, there's no harm done. This is just a joke."

"Yeh," he grinned still more broadly, "a joke. Well, lady"—he took the five-dollar bill—"I like something funny myself once in awhile."

He went to the telephone and Marilyn stood next to it, holding the door open. The mechanic followed instructions exactly. He had some difficulty with the Oriental, but his masculine voice succeeded in bringing Mr. Granger to the wire.

Jeffrey seemed considerably puzzled, and Marilyn had all she could do to refrain from laughter, but obviously the African stamps were the touch of inspiration and allayed whatever suspicions he might have felt.

"I will send my man down for it immediately," he said.

"Thanks, a lot," Marilyn told the mechanic, and ran off.

She approached Jeffrey's house by another road that brought her directly behind it. Then stopped and listened. She heard an automobile engine start, and smiled.

"Bye, bye, little Chinese."

Skirting a long hedge, she returned to her car, got out her bag and hurried to Jeffrey's front door. It was locked. The rear door, too. Also both side doors and the entrance to the cellar.

She looked around and noticed a living room window slightly open. The grounds were kept disgustingly neat and free of clutter. Not even a hose reel or roller was in sight.

She did not know where his room was, or out of which window he might be looking. It was equally risky to try to reach the stables or the garage, but Marilyn finally chose the latter. The door stood invitingly open.

She was rewarded with a small ladder standing in one corner, which she picked up and carried. Reaching the window without delay, she put the ladder against the side of the house and climbed up. Softly, ever so softly, the reckless girl raised the window. Then she descended the ladder and carried up her bag. The next moment she was inside of Granger's great trophy room.

Marilyn looked around the room, conscious that she had a different feeling toward it. The place had become infinitely more intimate, more real, more personal to her. She sensed that it belonged to her, that she belonged to it—a sort of possession.

The thought of how much Jeffrey would have resented that conception caused the girl to chuckle. She pointed to a bare spot on the wall between a cheetah skin and a water buffalo head.

"There," she whispered reflectively, "that would be a good place for me, wouldn't it, Jeffrey?"

She stood a moment longer, clutching her bag comfortingly. Somehow it *was* a great comfort. Almost a guarantee against harm or failure. It seemed to give her presence here authority, permanence. She reasoned it was just impossible to eject a nice young lady with a bag, while it was entirely within the realm of probability that the same young lady, without a bag, might be most promptly, even forcibly, put out.

She hesitated, peeped into the dining room and then the library, which, a little to her surprise, was a real library, and on tiptoes mounted the stairs.

Marilyn set her foot far in on each tread, and mounted absolutely without a creak. It was an old house, carefully restored, and she loved it as she had never loved her own, before she reached the top of the stairs.

There was a wide, sunny landing, with a broad window seat and exotic tropical plants at either end.

She turned and surveyed the hall.

Five doors opened on it. Four of them were shut; the second on her left was open.

Softly, ever so softly, she stole toward it. Carefully she peered around the edge.

It was pronouncedly a man's bedroom—a "den," alive with prints and books and tackle of stream and field and woods.

In the most sinfully comfortable leather chair she had ever seen in her life, Jeffrey was reclining, a book in his lap, and drowsily staring out of a window which, fortunately, had not given him a view of the garage.

He looked the very picture of a man in Eden before the entrance of woman. Even Marilyn felt a pang of compunction at the thought of breaking the peace which passeth all feminine understanding.

A little feeling of envy and a bit of resentment still held her back.

A man's serenity. Once or twice she had seen it in her father—such a solid, almost touchable thing. Women had never anything quite like it.

She took a step into the room.

"Yes, as we were saying—" she began, and waited.

CHAPTER XIII

SOCIETY BARES ITS FANGS



HE figure in the chair tightened. Serenity was shattered instantly — shattered to star dust, yet Jeffrey made no abrupt movement.

The intruder thrilled with pride at her man's deep seated poise and presence of mind. She realized that, at that moment, she must have been the greatest surprise of his life, yet when his dark eyes turned upon her they evinced nothing except smoldering antagonism.

"Yes," he said bitterly, "I might have known it! The first time my man leaves me, *you* slip in. How the devil did you do it?"

"Why," was the cheery rejoinder, "African stamps brought me."

"African stamps! Well, I'll be—of course, that was it. I had a hunch something was crooked about that phone call."

Marilyn edged closer and perched herself daintily on the low foot-board of the bed, nonchalantly swinging her feet.

"How are you, anyhow?" A pause. "What made you risk your neck to get away from us? Weren't you comfortable?"

"Too damned comfortable!" Jeffrey growled.

"Do you hate me as much as all that?"

"Do you think I'm going to give you the satisfaction of knowing I have feelings as strong as hate about you? You're just one more woman to me, that's all."

She rose and put her hands on the arm of his chair, and leaned over toward him.

"That's all I want to be, you silly man."

He pushed her away.

"Will you kindly be off?"

Marilyn straightened, looked queerly at him, and walked out of the room. She picked up the handbag she had left in the hall.

"Good Lord!" Jeffrey groaned when he saw it. "What do you mean by that bag?"

"Merely that I'm moving in."

"Damn it, I don't want you around! Can't you get that through your thick head?"

"H-m," said Marilyn.

He had the tiger's instinct of wanting to crawl into a hole when hurt, and merely let Nature heal him.

"If you could even begin to understand how much I detest fussing around me, especially female fussing, perhaps you'd have the decency to leave."

"Decency—? Isn't that a strange



The next moment she was inside Granger's room

word from you? Do you mean to tell me you're reverting to a civilized type? You'll be talking about the consolations of religion next."

"There's no danger there'll ever be any talking about anything you would understand. But I can tell you this: in my own way, I have a code of my own."

"Well, in my own way I have a code, too. I can't abandon any one who needs me."

Marilyn laughed softly.

"You've got more brass than a cheap jewelry store. What makes you think I need you?"

"Hush now," said Marilyn. "Don't excite yourself. I know you're not yourself, but I think I can pull you through."

She picked up the bag again and hunted herself a room. Humming a little tune, she changed her frock. She changed it for no particular necessity or reason. It simply added to the feeling of permanence she had here. In a way it put the sign of authority on her presence. It was also deliciously intimate.

She returned to Mr. Granger. He noted the new frock and glared speechlessly. She took her position a few feet away and looked at him steadily.

"Let me tell you something, Jeffrey Granger," she said. "I've learned a great deal from you. I've learned the right that every human being has to take what he or she wants. I've learned that a desire is its own justification. If my presence here bothers you, consider it your own fault. I'm here, and here I remain, till you're entirely normal again, so help me God."

He burst into bitter self-derisive laughter.

"I'll be eternally throttled!" he gasped. "I begin to see the advantages of civilization at last, myself. Why, you heathen wild cat, no jungle woman would force herself on any one who didn't want her."

"No jungle woman would have the intelligence to see that you did want me, through all your protests."

"But I want you *when* I want you," he protested, "not when you *think* I want you."

"Oh, that's all nonsense!" Marilyn said, putting the room into what was her conception of order. "It all boils down to this. I'm here, and I'm staying here." She turned once more to him. "And you might just as well tell your Chinese man, Friday, the facts. The whole Mongolian army couldn't

get me out of here, and if you want to see a riot, just ask him to try it. Now—what would you like for supper?"

Marilyn Mercer had always regarded society very much as one regards air. It was something one lived in and breathed of, that was that. She had always been of society, a part of it, without being conscious of it really. And not being conscious of it, she had never really understood it, or her own part in it.

About two days after she had taken up her quarters in Jeffrey Granger's house, she began to understand it a little better. Her position there had become an obsession with her.

The girl had gone starkly primitive, alienated herself from society. She refused to believe society had any hold on her. As she had told Jeffrey, a desire was sacred in itself.

But she found out differently. She found out that an individual desire, an individual need, an individual want, may conflict with a mass or social desire; perhaps with a social sense of mass protection and racial self-preservation.

She began to see society now as a thing in itself, against which she had set herself apart. A vast tremendous force that began to take on the shape of a tiger, too. It was forthright; it was cruel; it was pouncing. It had ferocious claws and dripping jowls. It lusted to tear and to demolish.

Under the veneer of civilization it was actuated by a savage, instinctive defense of the primitive herding law which guided animals in the jungle.

The claw which the tiger extended toward Marilyn was lovely, youthful Sybil Buxton. Marilyn had always thought Sybil the most urbane and sophisticated in her set. Sybil came about tea time, driven over by Jimmy Buxton.

Marilyn vaguely suspected that her own father was having an affair with Sybil's older sister. It gave her a faint

sense of relationship to Sybil. It also probably accounted for Sybil's presence. Mr. Mercer had probably turned most easily toward her, upon learning his daughter was staying with Jeffrey. There was a paradox and irony concealed in this somewhere, but Marilyn was the only one to appreciate it.

It was just before tea time when the Oriental called her down from Jeffrey's room. He had ushered Sybil and Jimmy into the great living room. Jimmy was pop-eyed with excitement at the trophies and guns which adorned it. Marilyn could see that Sybil also was by no means unaffected by the furnishings.

"Oh, my dear, I never dreamed—even if I suspected it," she said, taking Marilyn's hands.

Marilyn wasn't quite sure what Sybil meant, but presumed the comment referred to the room and its revelation of Jeffrey's character. She proceeded on that tack.

"Yes. It's a marvelous place, isn't it?"

For the first time in her life she saw Sybil, famous for her directness, sent off on a tangent. Sybil seemed to find it singularly hard to get to the subject which she had evidently come to discuss.

They made a pilgrimage around the room, stopping at every trophy on the walls. They examined the guns. They circled the great elephant's foot on the table, which had been made into some kind of receptacle. They lifted the ivory tusks of an elephant and the horn of a rhinoceros.

They were quite a little like two jungle women appraising the values of one of their tribesmen's expeditions into the hunting country.

Marilyn studied the collection and the room really for the first time, but only Jimmy Buxton had his heart in the business.

The Oriental brought in tea. The women fenced subtly between sips and nibbles. Finally Sybil took herself in

hand. She set a cup down in determination, turned to Marilyn and looked straight into her eyes.

"My dear child, this is all tremendously wonderful, of course," she said quickly, "but it simply cannot be done."

Marilyn met her eyes with a baby stare of innocence.

"What can't be done, Sybil?"

"Ah, now, Marilyn," Sybil reproached her, "give me the credit at least of being frank with me. Do you think it's any fun for me to come in and intrude on your business?"

"Hardly," said Marilyn. "That's what makes me wonder why you're doing it."

"I'm doing it because I have known you ever since you began. Because I'm as fond of you as if you were Jimmy. Because your father asked me to—you see how utterly honest I am with you—and because, after years of trying, you'll finally manage to worry him into sleeplessness."

"All worthwhile reasons, but what have they to do with me?"

Sybil stared contemplatively at the younger woman.

"No." She slowly shook her head. "I don't think this is a pose. You must mean it."

"I doubt if you understand how much I do mean."

"I'm beginning to get a glimmer of it."

Sybil leaned across the table and addressed her friend earnestly.

"Listen, kid, you know I'm a pretty good sport myself. I'm not going to hand you the old line about how broad-minded I am, but still consider it said. I really am broad-minded. But, Marilyn, darling, there's a limit, you know, despite the proverb, you can have your cake and eat it, too. There's no use running amuck without rime or reason. There's a lot of rot in that saying about one glorious hour in some place or other being better than a cycle of Cathay. What do you know about

Cathay? How do you know you can't have a whole cycle of days and nights by just playing the game with a little sense?"

Marilyn was unconvinced.

"What's the use of talking about sense in a senseless situation? Until you mentioned it, Sybil, I never even missed this great sense of yours."

"The point I'm trying to make, dear," Sybil continued, "is that you're uselessly setting up too many obstacles for your own happiness. Hurdling is all very well for a hundred yards or so, but you can't keep it up for a whole lifetime. Sooner or later you have to consider the world, and your particular position in it. You can't go on outraging it, and grieving people who love you, without having the world pay you back the same way, and having those people who love you strike back in self-defense. It just can't be done."

She reached over and laid her hand on Marilyn's.

"Come home with me now, Marilyn. Call it a day and a night. It still isn't too late."

Marilyn gave the hand a little affectionate pat.

"Thanks a lot, Sybil, old thing, but I'm staying. I know you mean well. I know you've talked nothing but honest counsel and good sense. Only this is a situation in which good sense has no particular sacred part. It's just one of those things."

Sybil Buxton rose, gazing long and intently at her friend. Then she shrugged her shoulders hopelessly, reached out and gently shook Marilyn's hand.

"Well, so long, darling," she said lightly, "I hope it all comes out all right. Forgive me if you think I've been presumptuous."

"Heaven knows you've been presumptuous, Sybil," Marilyn told her, "and I don't know whether I can forgive you. But, darn it, you've made me love you more."

She kissed Sybil quickly, then

stepped back and led the way to the door to bid her guests good day.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BRAND OF MAGDALEN



UT society's claws weren't all as velvety as Sybil Buxton's. Few people were so graciously and so fundamentally understanding.

Marilyn had hardly finished breakfast the next morning when the bell rang. Two minutes later the Oriental came up.

"Velly fat lady see you," he announced.

Marilyn hesitated. She was in negligee. It would take her only a moment to put on a frock, but she decided to go down just as she was.

Mrs. Livingstone Smythe-Bowers was awaiting her, like a monument of all the outraged inhibitions. Where Sybil Buxton felt her right to speak was based on knowing Marilyn since her birth, Mrs. Livingstone Smythe-Bowers's authority for her interference was built upon an acquaintance-ship with Marilyn's own mother.

For a moment Mrs. Livingstone Smythe-Bowers was not sure that she ought to shake hands with Marilyn, but habit and a certain cowardice compelled her to.

"My dear, my dear, my dear!" she wailed. "Whatever do you mean by this? I knew your dear departed mother, and I'm sure she must be turning in her grave."

Marilyn would have liked nothing better than to have known that Mrs. Livingstone Smythe-Bowers was turning in her own, too. It took heroic self-control to keep from telling her.

"The meaning of all this," she said sweetly, however, "is that I should be delighted if you would stay to lunch."

Mrs. Livingstone Smythe-Bowers gagged at her brazenness.

"Now you sit right here, my dear child, and let me talk to you," she com-



Vaguely she listened to the plump lady

manded, driving the girl into a corner.

Marilyn's situation was desperate, and that alone saved her. Realizing as much, she went into a frenzy of mental games to counteract the effect of the old dowager's voice.

Vaguely she listened to rumors of how well Mrs. Livingstone Smythe-Bowers understood the heart of a young girl. Needless was she reminded that Mrs. Livingstone Smythe-Bowers also had daughters, nieces and daughters-in-law — and how Marilyn pitied them.

From afar off came the thunder of Mrs. Livingstone Smythe-Bowers's commanding voice, proclaiming the canons of church, state, family and society, but nine-tenths of it fell upon the girl as upon the desert air.

Marilyn was counting sheep jumping over a rail. She was multiplying odd numbers by even ones. She was trying to remember the capitals of the forty-eight States of the United States of America. She was bounding Soviet Russia and visualizing the map of Africa. Her mind had never been so academically busy since she had left finishing school and worked on her regents' examinations.

In effect, Mrs. Livingstone Smythe-Bowers made less impression upon her than a radio preacher could make on an Eskimo without a receiving set.

Mrs. Livingstone Smythe-Bowers all but tried to carry Marilyn physically back with her. It wasn't in the good lady's make-up to believe that her oratory could have fallen flat, and she was sure she would see Marilyn that night in her father's house. Marilyn escorted her to the door, maintaining a gracious exterior.

Once the door was between them, however, her exterior changed promptly. She stamped her foot and swore. She swore softly but skillfully for five minutes. She finally decided that the grave was far too good for Mrs. Livingstone Smythe-Bowers, and then she calmed down and went to see her host.

Jeffrey looked up as Marilyn came in. He studied her face and apparently divined her mood. He seemed to take her negligee for granted, or had got used to it, and it piqued the girl a little that her mood rather than her appearance should be the more interesting to him these days.

"That was another outrider of society," he accused her, "wasn't it?"

"Mrs. Livingstone Smythe-Bowers," said Marilyn with a forced gayety.

"Do you realize in what a pickle you are putting me?"

She stared at him.

"Putting you?"

"Yes, me. Don't you realize it's the man who pays and pays? Don't you understand, that the first time I stick my head out of my own house there are going to be about a hundred jealous males waiting for me behind trees, forced to wait there by a regiment of outraged female women, who have no more on their minds than to monkey with other people's business?"

"Do you mean to tell me you are actually afraid to face the world?"

"I'm afraid of nothing," Granger retorted hotly. "But I damn well resent having my life balled up by you. To say nothing of my present peace of mind."

"Your present peace of mind? I thought you'd got used to me by now."

"Well, you make a pretty good maid of all work, I admit, but you're a fearful nuisance, just the same. By the time I get about, that fool China boy is going to be completely demoralized by you, and the laziest beast in the whole Occident."

Marilyn laughed a tinkling note of triumph. In a couple of days she had put that impassive Confucian completely under her thumb. That was one trick which had certainly got under Jeffrey's skin.

The girl went singing to her room, forgetting about the Sybil Buxtons and Mrs. Livingstone Smythe-Bowers. She found a thousand other things to do, which she had never done before, or ever thought of doing, but which she couldn't dream of letting any one else do now.

Marilyn's father was the next to arrive. He was a sadly embarrassed man. It was a stiff order suddenly to take up the reins of parental authority after one had let them dangle for ten years;

when one, in fact, had never grasped them firmly.

The poor darling simply didn't know how or where to begin. For the first time in her life Marilyn had a pang of sympathy for him. She wanted so to help him out. She wanted so to pull his head over on her shoulder and counsel him. He seemed to stand there so badly in need of advice. She felt so infinitely wiser than he.

On an unusual impulse she threw her arms around him and kissed him. It startled him to no end. Whatever resolution he had come armed with was entirely shattered. He could only stand there and stammer.

"Now you come here with me, daddy," she said protectingly, "and let me have a nice, serious talk with you."

She led him into the corner where Mrs. Livingstone Smythe-Bowers had marooned her, and from a somewhat different angle Marilyn felt a little bit like that lady as he seated himself meekly.

"I don't know what you think is going on here, dad," she said, "but you are probably wrong. I'm not asking you to trust me, because, although you are my adored father, I don't think it's any of your business."

Mr. Mercer winced, but did not interrupt as his daughter rattled on.

"The way I look at it is that if the government lets me vote, you ought to be willing to see me live where I want to. For the time being I'm living here. I may be living at home to-morrow or I don't know where. For the time being I'm happy."

She put her hand on his.

"Daddy, you've no idea how happy I am! Isn't that enough for you?"

"H-m, h-m," he rumbled. "By Jove, it is!"

He rose like an old soldier and marched to the door with her. Just before she opened it, Mr. Mercer leaned over and awkwardly pecked her on both cheeks. Then in a panic he fled.

For the first time in her life Marilyn realized she loved her father.

Suddenly, from above, a voice sounded down to them. It was Jeffrey, who had come to the hall window and opened it.

"Mr. Mercer—Mr. Mercer!" he called down. "Aren't you going to take her with you? Be a sport and take that woman away with you!"

Marilyn's father started; he looked up in astonishment.

"What—what is the meaning of this?" he stammered at Marilyn.

"It's just Jeffrey's little joke, dad," she said, pushing him out and pulling him down to the car. "Jeffrey has a terribly funny sense of humor."

The car started off. The man with a terribly funny sense of humor stuck his head out of the window and yelled and yelled after it:

"Mr. Mercer—Mr. Mercer! Come back here and take that female girl away from here!"

The big black car sped on unheedingly.

ence under his roof—social arguments. *From Jeffrey!* Marilyn's face burned, but the steel inside her did not bend.

Grimly she swallowed the insulting fact that he didn't want her there. A question clanged again and again in her mind—why on earth was she staying?

Duty? Well, maybe. Stubborn perversity? Sex lure?

A hard steadfastness gripped her heart. If only people would leave her alone about it, she could be happy here. She could handle Jeffrey all right. Was the whole world resentful of her happiness?

One trouble-eyed female had known Marilyn since babyhood. Previous infancy was dragged in as an argument, an appeal to her *conscience*. God! Another visitor had known her mother—this put forth as a reason for abandoning Jeffrey.

Marilyn felt herself awaiting the appearance of some visitor who had known her grandmother. They were tracing back her heredity, tracking back to the roots of her origin. As though such things mattered. It was sickening!

The doorbell rang and the Oriental came upstairs to announce—

"Pleachah man here. Want to see velly much missee."

Preacher man—that would mean the Rev. Waldo Galbraith.

"Heaven help us now," groaned Jeffrey. "Enter the clergy!"

Marilyn powdered her nose, rouged her lips bravely, and went down to meet the attack of the High Church. Galbraith was at ease in the living room, smoking a cigarette.

"Oh, hello Marilyn!"

He was on his feet, tall, gray at the temples, socially polished. She had always liked him, probably because there was a permanent troubled scowl between his black brows. And he didn't affect a bulldog and pipe like the rector at St. George's.

"You can't cast the first stone—

CHAPTER XV

THE RECTOR EXPRESSES HIMSELF

BUT Marilyn was not done with the world yet. Other ladies came with arguments representing the stern disapproval of the outside world.

Nice girls—well-reared girls—simply did not do such things!

Many of the arguments were sound. Many of them had a trenchant common sense she could not fail to perceive. Marilyn was not a fool. Society did not forgive questionable women—society *tolerated* them.

Men would sneer and snicker behind her back. They'd look at her with an odd, understanding expression in their eyes. Women would find a thousand subtle ways to snub her—

Even Jeffrey, renegade that he was, saw all this and protested at her pres-

you're too late!" she greeted him mischievously.

"What you probably need is for your father to spank you," he smiled in all friendliness.

"Did you come here to argue with me?"

"I came here because all the old hens and roosters in my flock have been pestering me into it," the Rev. Galbraith informed his hostess. "And I must say, for a fallen woman, you look remarkably innocent."

"I *am* innocent."

"Well, that's all to the good, Marilyn—I'm glad to hear it. It's my duty to inquire into such matters within my fold."

"Your *duty*?" she inquired thinly.

"So I have been informed by three-quarters of the congregation. And I'm not sure but what they're right, Marilyn. You have set off a few Roman candles, you know. I'm quite positive the bishop wouldn't approve of your conduct at all."

"The bishop couldn't understand it at all—"

"I'm sure he couldn't," the rector agreed. "Still, he is the bishop, the church is the church, and society is society. We must take them all as we find them. We can get a broken head very easily, any of us. I'd like to save you that if I can. Is there anything I can do for you?"

It was a new tone, a refreshing variation of criticism. But Galbraith had always been that way—remarkably human. Had he not been a clergyman he might have been *quite* human—

"I need somebody to tell me that I'm not a Magdalen," she admitted. "I'm about fed up on this scarlet woman stuff I've been hearing."

He looked at her steadily.

"So am I. Unofficially, of course. Your love story is pretty much public property by now—so I'm not actually intruding. I just don't want to see you scramble your life, Marilyn—that's all."

"I'm afraid there's nothing you can do about it," she told him.

"You're right. I can't get inside your mind or your heart and soul. I wouldn't do that even if it were possible. In fact, I don't think it's any of my business what you do—that's not orthodox, but I'm afraid it's true. It's sheer impertinence, trying to tamper with the soul of somebody else. But if you want a friend, or need one, you can count on me, Marilyn."

This was a new key—a note of understanding that bordered upon her own feelings. From a clergyman, the upholder of all the conventions and stereotyped moralities! Positively, it was shocking—

"But you're supposed to tell me I'm wicked!" Marilyn protested, half confused.

"Who am I to judge you?" the rector smiled. "I know you and your father—I knew your mother when she was alive—I know you are sound people. You don't have to worry much about anything, except the wagging tongues of scandal—and there's a certain bravery in defying the Philistines. The only point is, you ought to be sure that the game is worth the candle."

Marilyn's eyes began to glow fervently. "It is!" she breathed.

"You alone are the judge of that," he assured her. "Apparently you're one of those rare souls that's to be allowed to work out its own problem in a particular and unusual manner. I believe in personal liberty, and have a simple, fundamental faith that a decent motive will carry you through the mire unsoiled. An adventure like this would send some girls right to the dogs, but not you, Marilyn. You're going to come out of it a finer and cleaner woman. I believe that. It's revolutionary—but I feel it in my bones."

Marilyn regarded him with level eyes, her heart beating warmly in her breast. It was a shock, such a pleasing, comforting shock, to find, at last,

a human being who could comprehend some part of her inchoate emotions.

She thought of the Rev. Galbraith's own stodgy wife, and realized, for the first time, how blind she herself was to other people's lives. Perhaps there was a tragedy greater than her own locked in this man's breast. There was something of the Spartan in his lean face.

"You're wonderful," she told him quietly. "If the going gets too rough, you're the only person I'd ever think of turning to."

He was on his feet now, gathering his hat and stick. Their hands met in a strong, parting clasp.

"Fight your battle in your own way, Marilyn, and rest secure in the goodness of the Lord," he assured her, half smiling.

And then he, too, was gone.

CHAPTER XVI

END OF THE TRAIL



NEVER before had Marilyn so deeply felt the "consolation of religion." The simple, honest, human understanding of Dr. Galbraith clutched her to the depths of her spirit. She ran upstairs buoyantly. She felt recreated, pure as a child.

Jeffrey turned and stared at those faint natural roses in her cheeks, and the maidenly exultation in her eyes. He seemed to understand, from the visible effects upon her, the tenure of the preacher's visit.

"Oh, my soul!" he wailed. "What is it now? Don't tell me we're in this with benefit of clergy."

Marilyn ran to his side and, before he could resist, picked up his hand and kissed it. He tore it away, but she was already running out of the room. Somehow she could feel his wondering stare following her.

Mr. Granger went out the next day. The girl went with him. She had no

intention of letting him away from her sight.

He stood on his front steps, and the second the door closed behind him, took a long, deep breath and flung out his arms. That gesture smote her more than anything he had ever said. Could she ever confine or tame this man? He muttered something under his breath.

"What did you say?"

"I said, Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!" he exploded savagely. "I know at last what it means. I assure you I have just begun to appreciate it."

He set out so rapidly she had difficulty keeping up with him. She had a terrible feeling of being excluded from him the moment they got out of doors.

That hound way he had of raising his nose to the air, scenting far-off things, she had no knowledge of, and of sniffing the vagrant, spiced breezes of the four-quarters of the earth!

His mind drove him ahead on all the trails of liberation, following, in spirit, all the paths of adventure and self-sufficiency he had always known.

Marilyn followed, like a little girl with pigtails flying, tagging alongside and a few steps behind a drum-major.

She had the wisdom to keep silent. Without a word exchanged between them, they trudged down the road, turned into a lane, entered a path through a woods, crossed the fields and climbed a hill.

Atop the hill they looked out over the sea. Jeffrey breathed deeper of the salt tang that meant voyaging and escape to him. His companion's breath came in quick pants of a panic that was budding deep within her.

Then suddenly, something changed. He touched her shoulder.

"Sit down a moment, Marilyn," the man said gently. "I want to talk with you."

The girl's heart sank. Her knees failed, so it was sheer physical necessity for her to sit down. His gentleness dealt her a blow of fear which all

his roughness had failed to do. She was horribly afraid. Suddenly she knew that against gentleness in him, of all men, she would have no resources.

"I want to say to you," he began, looking away from her and across the sea, "that this has all been most extraordinary. In my foolish, male sort of way, I used to think I knew all about women. But I only learned about women from you. If I have been rough and brutal, forgive me, won't you?"

No, no, no! she wanted to cry out. Don't apologize for having been as you were, dear. I loved it and wouldn't have it changed for anything. Oh, don't apologize—don't take it away from me.

"You see," he went on, still not looking at her, "I really did want you like the devil from the first minute I saw you. You are such a damned, delectable sort of woman. You are such—get this right—honor to a man. Then I began to want you even more. Until—oh! damn you!"

Jeffrey turned and looked at her now.

"Why did you make me afraid to take you?" he asked.

Her eyes fell before his, and now it was she who was gazing far across the water.

"I understand every whit of what you have done for me and were willing to do," the man continued. "I am not going to insult you with any thanks. On the contrary, I feel anything but gratitude for it. It just cut the ground from under my feet. It's all muddled, but what I'm trying to get at is this: I'm just a casual, roving male, who shies at all entangling alliances, and you are the very devil to tangle up things. You are one of those frivolous people who, down underneath, are so almighty serious and everlasting about anything that gets to them, while I—I can't stay in any one place two months.

"And I am a rotten traveling com-

panion. In fact, I can't imagine traveling with any one. I'm entirely a lone prowler. I have to move on my own. I'd be every rotten unhappiness in the world to you, and you are the first person in my life I have ever considered in that way. You got to me to the extent of me wanting to spare you unhappiness."

How dare you, how dare you, how dare you? Marilyn wanted to cry aloud. How dare you, wanting to spare me unhappiness? How dare you try to lay down a course I should follow! How dare you refuse me my right to be happy or unhappy in my own way? How dare you consider me on the basis of anything which pertains to you alone, and does not give me a chance to build on my own grounds?

But she did not speak. She sat absolutely motionless, her hands clasped around her soft, silken knees, her eyes misted.

Yes, autumn was in the air. Soon one would smell dead leaves burning—the funeral-pyre of one more summer, and then there would be another summer, and another. Funny, how people went on just that way, summer after summer.

Yes, autumn. The sea was deep blue now, shot through with deeper, colder greens. A coastwise vessel, two-funneled, white and proud, was moving on the horizon. There was a sail boat off to the left. Far over, on the beach at the right, some little, dark spots were moving jerkily on the sands, probably gathering driftwood. There was a sting in the air. Yes, gathering driftwood because it was autumn.

She felt a little cold, but made no signs of arising. He sat motionless beside her, now silent.

Suddenly, behind them, from a cottage down under the hill, a radio loud-speaker brayed a metallic blues into the clean air.

Abruptly the scene changed. The girl could visualize so perfectly that tea

room, wherever it was, and the dancers. The close, stuffy atmosphere of pastry, powder, rouge, perfume and human bodies. And it brought a pathetic weariness to her. It seemed to symbolize the barbaric strains of every band in the world, blaring out the wild abandonment, a sensuous reproduction of unutterable weariness. It was all jungle, after all. Civilization, explanation, she laughed aloud.

"Why are you laughing?" Granger asked.

"Because," she answered, "it is the sheep dog and tabby cat who are the rare birds in this world."

"Thinking of Fuller?"

"Not yet."

"After a bit of me, he has become a novelty to you again?"

"Not a novelty, an understanding."

"An alternative?"

"Not yet—just food for thought."

They sat silent for a short time longer.

"Come," she said at last, rising, "let's go. I want to pack my bag."

CHAPTER XVII

THE CLASH OF JUNGLE PASSIONS



HEY walked back slowly, with only casual and non-committal speech between them. Once she suggested that they hurry their steps.

"Why hurry?" Jeffrey answered. "Aren't you having dinner with me?"

"I hadn't thought of it," said Marilyn.

"Oh, now," he protested, "let's be nice and friendly about all of this. Let's not be dramatic and abrupt."

"Also, let's not be sentimental and lingering," she replied.

"That's a new one on me," he laughed.

"Maybe it is because you haven't been found out yet."

"You're not bitter, are you, Marilyn?"

"Bitter?" she echoed. "At what?"

"At life—at this particular section of it, at me."

"Life—well, it's just life. This section of it—there are other sections, aren't there?"

"You—well, you are you, and I am I, and so many people have told me lately that I am still young."

"And still so damned beautiful," Granger said, half regretfully. "Then, I gather, you are having dinner with me?"

"If it will give you any particular satisfaction, I shan't mind," the girl responded lifelessly.

"It will give me a great deal of satisfaction—to part as friends."

"Oh, yes, friends!"

It was dusk when they reached the house. He went up to his room to don a dressing gown, before coming down again and mixing cocktails.

Marilyn went to her room to pack her bag. She had brought an evening dress, but had never worn it. She laid it out. It was a deep, live blue that set off her blond beauty as nothing else could.

She sat down at the dressing table and prepared to put on her make-up with dramatic care. She would give him a climax to remember, when they parted "as friends." She would have summoned all the pomades and powders and paints in existence, all the tricks of all women of all time, to help her furnish an image that would burn in his memory for the rest of his life—after they had parted as friends.

She had hardly taken her seat, when some one knocked at her door.

"Gem'men to see missee downstairs," said the Oriental.

She started and arose. She remembered now half hearing a bell.

The Chinaman had vanished. Probably her father. What could he want with her now?

Marilyn hastily drew a kimono around her, thrust her feet into her brocade mules, and went down.

A fire had been lighted in the fireplace and an appropriate ruddy glow played over the room. A candle at either end of the mantel only emphasized the carmine and violet and green play of the flames.

A man was standing in front of the fireplace.

It was not her father.

"Hello!" she sang out.

He whirled around. For a moment her heart stopped. The caller was Tom Fuller.

Then she went forward, hands outstretched. The kimono fell slightly apart, revealing the low-cut lines of her *chemise* and the starting curves of her breasts.

"Why, Tom, it's wonderful to see you. I'm so glad you came. How are you?"

He took both her hands, but unconsciously his eyes dropped from her eyes to the deep "V" made by the kimono's edge. Its significance, whatever it was to him, seemed to sink into him, and abruptly his hands relaxed their pressure.

His eyes closed tightly for a flash, and then opened again. There was a look of mingled hunger and hurt in them. The look of a man who is proof against everything save the testimony of his senses.

And then something wild seemed to sweep over Tom Fuller. A look such as she had never seen even on Jeffrey's face transformed his, a look that revealed every passion man's flesh can be heir to, a look infinitely older than the tiger.

He sprang forward and grasped her in his arms.

"You have all but wrecked my life, but I have got to have you, keep that in your mind, because I'm taking you away with me."

The girl tried to push him away, but she might have tried to push down an oak tree.

"I have loved you ever since I have known you, and I love you now more

than ever before. You are mine. You are mine by the right of your own promise, and I will give you up to no man who ever lived. I have got you, and I am going to hold you. I'll fight the whole world for you!"

"Let me go!"

She tried to tear herself out of his arms, but she might as well have tried to tear herself out of the folds of a python.

"Got you and keep you," he panted hoarsely into her face, his features transformed with the most earthy of passions. "Nothing can keep you from me. I forgive you—forgive you—do you understand—everything—I am taking you as you are, the mistress of another man!"

"Get out of here, go, go! If Jeffrey finds you here—he'll kill you! Your life won't be worth—"

"If I lay my eyes on that slimy Granger again—"

"And what will happen then?" A low, icy voice spoke from the doorway. "And, moreover, will you have the goodness to explain what all this is about?"

Marilyn was released so abruptly that she went reeling up against the wall. Fuller turned and faced Jeffrey. His head was thrust forward with almost murderous antagonism. For a moment the two men stood frozen to their places. A deadly, thunderous silence descended upon the room. The beech logs crackled and spit carmine and violet and green flames. The shadow of a man, hunched like a gorilla, wavered hugely on the opposite wall.

Imperceptibly the distance between the two men narrowed. Imperceptibly with the inevitability of soft-moving Fate they came together, yielding to a savage, primal urge.

Powerless to utter a cry, Marilyn sagged, rooted, spellbound, against the wall.

An arm, magnified by the dusk until it seemed like the battering-ram of a

primeval tree, was rammed out. A lesser arm deflected it. The next instant the whole room was a tangle of pistonlike arms and macelike fists.

A lamp toppled from the table. Slowly it began; the girl watched, fascinated, as it crashed to pieces.

A chair was overturned slowly. A totem-pole, black with age and mystic smoke-steeped rites, began to sway; passed its balance, slowly, slowly, slowly fell. Slow, everything slow, as slowly moving Fate.

And, as though Fate had to pass on to other matters, the tempo abruptly changed, quickened.

Another lamp was flung over. A chair flew across the room. The two candles guttered out, and in the deeper dusk fists and arms and bodies raced into a mad mêlée.

The crash of a fist against flesh struck one clean note in a confused sound. Another fist answered patly as an echo.

Marilyn saw the two bodies leap together in a frenzy of hate. They thrashed and whirled and wrestled to part again, and, parting, each struck forth at the other, and both blows told solidly.

But the lesser form was caught off center, and, as though Fate had decided to linger an extra moment, that form began to topple backward with that same horrible slowness. It sought to right itself, sprawled awkwardly, and the rug on the waxed floor shot out from under its feet, and it fell back.

Again the clean sounds stood out above all other noises. The sound of

flesh and bone on metal. A head had struck on the guard rail of the fireplace.

One man lay absolutely still.

The room hushed to silence.

The other stared at the motionless form for an instant, and then flashed around to the girl. He crossed to her in a bound and seized her by the shoulder.

"There, there, there is your killer!" Tom panted exultantly. "Down and out! What more do you want? Shall I beat him to death?"

Marilyn's knees broke beneath her, only his grip on her shoulder kept her half erect.

"I want—only him!"

Tom stepped back from her and stared at her, stupefied.

"My God!" he gasped. "Do you mean to say—"

"Jeffrey!" she screamed. "Don't! Don't!"

Granger had half arisen behind the other man, crouched to leap.

She thought she saw something flash in his hands. Fuller whirled.

"So you want *me*?" a voice bel-
lowed. "I have caught up with you at last, and, by God, you will get it!"

A shot rang out. It tore the great room into pieces, shattered the walls, and split the girl's head with its detonation. Another shot. Something heavy and human fell.

Everything went dark for Marilyn. Her head whirled insanely for an instant, a blind instinct drove her along the wall to the door. Her hand went out fumblingly and found the switch. She pressed hard.

THE THIRD INSTALLMENT OF THIS VIVID ROMANCE OF THE TIGER-MAN
AND THE GIRL WHO TRIED TO TAME HIM WILL APPEAR IN
THE FEBRUARY MUNSEY, ON SALE JANUARY 19



The girl tried to shriek, but her voice broke piteously

A Lesson to Lionel Cutts

*How two young people who loved to "make believe"
ran into an adventure more thrilling
than any of their fancies*

By E. Phillips Oppenheim



AT twenty minutes past eight on a dark but pleasantly warm autumn evening, Lionel Cutts sallied out into the streets of the ancient city of Norwich in search of adventures. His mind was agreeably free from all sense of responsibility. He had made sure that his sample cases were in order, and that a porter would be ready to help him with them on the following morning. He had sent his employers a full account of his doings in a neighboring town. He had inclosed a very creditable sheet of orders and the usual

grumble as to the immoral competition indulged in by a rival firm—which competition, he managed to hint delicately, might have resulted in a serious loss of business but for his own personal popularity with his customers.

Mr. Cutts was fortified by the recent consumption of a substantial dinner, and he was conscious more than ever of that curious and most unaccountable thrill which nearly always stirred his pulses when he sallied out, after his day's work, into the lighted streets of some unfamiliar town. For Lionel Cutts, although an excellent commercial traveler and a young man of regular habits and blameless life, was an exceedingly romantic person.

The direction which his wanderings took was in itself a proof of his eccentricity. He deliberately avoided the crowded main street. In vain, so far as he was concerned, did the cinema palaces display their flamboyant signs. The huge advertisements of a world-famed circus left him unmoved. He wandered, instead, around the Cathedral Close, gazed up at the gloomy, ivy-covered houses, listened to the rustling of the wind in the elm trees, and then pursued for some distance the path which skirted the turgid river.

He could never explain, even to himself, the satisfaction that he derived from such peregrinations. He only knew that he was carried away from his everyday self. He felt a vague sense of superiority, and was dimly conscious of the existence of many things in life which had nothing whatever to do with the humdrum career of "our Mr. Lionel Cutts," of the firm of Merryweather, Jones & Co.

All the time, too, there was the unexpressed and perhaps unrealized hope of an adventure—a hope utterly vague, but sufficiently inspiring to lead him to the silent places when the din of crowded streets, the hum of many voices, and the lilt of popular music called loudly to most of his kind. A light in the window of a silent house,

the trim figure of a little maidservant suitably disguised, even the strains of a violin from the suddenly opened door of some remote public house, had all possessed their allurements for him. He had had many disappointments, some laughable, some almost humiliating, all commonplace. To-night was to be different!

It started, of course, with a girl. She passed him at the end of an empty street leading out from the Close—a slender, graceful girl with pale, impressive face and large dark eyes, which swept him over modestly, yet not without some interest, as she paused at the edge of the sidewalk. It was a lonely spot—there was scarcely another soul in sight—and, notwithstanding her undoubtedly refined appearance, her eyes had not been immediately withdrawn from his eager gaze.

Lionel Cutts took his courage in both hands. He removed the cigarette from his mouth and lifted his tweed cap. These things were done in the best possible air.

"Can I be of any assistance, miss?" he inquired.

She looked at him, not angrily, but with some surprise.

"Assistance?" she repeated, and from the first sound of her voice Lionel felt that his adventure had arrived.

"Thought you'd lost your way or something of that sort," he continued.

She actually smiled at him—a curious, apologetic little smile in which her eyes seemed to take part.

"To tell you the truth," she confessed, moving a little nearer to him, "I have."

"May I try to put you right?" he begged. "I'm a stranger here myself, just strolling about for a bit, but I know some of the streets."

"You don't live in the city, then?"

He shook his head. By this time, owing to his skillful maneuvers, they were walking side by side.

"Just passing through," he ex-

plained airily. "I'm taking a little motor tour through the eastern counties—looking for a shoot for next year, if I can find one."

"How lovely!" she murmured, glancing up at him shyly.

"What about yourself?" he inquired.

"Oh, I'm staying down there for a night or two with my father," she replied, motioning back toward the Close. "My father is a clergyman on the other side of the county, and we are staying with the dean."

Lionel Cutts didn't know exactly what a dean was, but he felt that it was something exceedingly superior. There was no doubt about the adventure now. His tone, however, became a little more humble.

"Would you honor me by taking a little walk?" he asked.

She seemed dubious. The shadow of her ecclesiastical relatives seemed to lean down over her.

"I don't think I dare," she murmured. "You see, I don't know you. Which way?"

"First turn to the left, around here," he replied promptly. "It leads right out into the country. Let's pretend we're old friends—been introduced by the bishop, and all that sort of thing. My name's Montessor—Lionel Montessor."

She sighed.

"I can see that you are used to having your own way," she observed resignedly. "Mine is Hardcastle—Nancy Hardcastle. I came out for a few minutes because all the rooms were so hot. Now you must tell me about your motor tour and your shooting. How lovely to have a shoot of your own!"

He smiled in a superior sort of way.

"I'd rather hear about your father's parish," he replied.

They had a very pleasant walk and exchanged many confidences of an interesting and personal nature. When they parted at the corner of the Close, the young lady became almost solemn.

"Mr. Montessor," she pleaded earnestly, "I want you to promise me, upon your word of honor, that you will forget this evening—that, if we should ever meet again in society, you will treat me as a stranger. I have never in my life done such a dreadful thing as this, but I won't regret it, if you will give me that promise."

He gave it, much impressed, and although she seemed at first terribly distressed by the condition that he imposed, she eventually paid—well away from the gas lamp.

Lionel Cutts walked back to his hotel with his feet upon the air. He enjoyed his whisky and soda, and watched the finish of a game of pool in the billiard room in high good humor. He had spent a thoroughly satisfactory evening.

II

THEIR next meeting was not in society. It took place at about five minutes past nine on the following morning, when Lionel Cutts was personally assisting in the unloading of his sample cases and their disposal inside the premises of Messrs. Hyde Brothers, drapers and haberdashers. Miss Hardcastle was standing behind the counter upon which, with some effort, he had just deposited his heaviest case. He looked at her, breathless, his mouth a little open, his healthy color deepening, large drops of perspiration, not wholly born of his exertions, standing out upon his forehead.

As usual in such a situation, the woman triumphed. She smiled at him very sweetly.

"Out early, aren't you, Mr. Montessor?" she remarked. "Are you motoring far to-day?"

"How's the dean?" he managed to stammer.

She leaned across the counter.

"Don't let's be silly any longer," she said earnestly. "If you want to see Mr. Orton, the new buyer, he's just over there, through that door. Mr.

Greatrex, of Brown & Horris, is in the next department, waiting to get hold of him, with about four truckloads of samples. If you slip through that door, you'll get in first."

Mr. Cutts, notwithstanding his romantic disposition, was all for business. He was off like a shot, and he beat the enterprising representative of Messrs. Brown & Horris by a head.

An hour later, on his way out, after a most successful interview, he approached the counter behind which Miss Hardcastle was standing.

"Will you please—" he began with some timidity.

"Same time and place to-night," she interrupted, glancing over her shoulder. "My name is Nancy Grey. Don't let them see you talking to me. It won't do you any good."

Lionel Cutts lifted his hat and left the shop, somewhat cheered. He kept his appointment that night with a certain amount of trepidation, but he found Miss Grey a most delightful young woman.

"Idiotic, wasn't it?" she laughed, as they shook hands. "But I can't help it. Being in business all day, a girl does sort of get fed up with commonplace things, and I'm confessing right away that I like to make believe. I was making believe all last evening. It came just as natural as anything."

"Same here," he acknowledged heartily. "I can't keep away from it. I don't care for the ordinary sort of amusements after my work's done. I like to wander off and make believe, too."

"Now isn't that queer?" she exclaimed, stopping short for a moment. "I never met any one else like that before. It's exactly what I do myself. Last night I was pretending that I had been dining with the bishop, and my car had broken down. I was looking for help when I met you; but I had to change things just a little, because I suddenly remembered that I wasn't in evening dress."

"Seems to me we ought to hit it off together," he declared confidently. "What shall it be to-night—a cinema or the theater?"

She shook her head disparagingly.

"That's just what ordinary people would do," she objected.

"Anything you like to suggest," he said gallantly.

She reflected for a moment. Then her face lit up.

"I know what!" she suddenly decided. "I'll take you where I went this morning before breakfast. I saw something which has made me imagine things all day. I've made up nearly a dozen stories about it. You shall come, too, and have a try. We'll have to go by tram. Do you mind?"

"Not I!" he answered. "I don't care how far it is. The farther the better!"

III

THEY traveled out of the city on an electric car, and during the journey Nancy never mentioned their destination. Arrived at the terminus, she led the way down what seemed to be a country lane in process of transition into a suburban street. On either side were recently built cottages of a box-like architectural style, each standing in a little plot of garden. The sidewalks had only just been put down, and the road itself was imperfectly made.

The whole neighborhood—in the gloom of the evening, at any rate—looked commonplace and uninspiring. Many of the houses were empty, some were still unfinished. The street lamps were feeble and insufficient, and once Lionel stumbled against a tub of mortar and a pile of bricks. He relieved himself by an expression to which his companion remained chivalrously deaf.

"You don't live down here, do you?" he asked doubtfully.

"Not I," she replied; "but my father's a builder, and this last house belongs to him. I came down on my

bike early this morning with a note, and—well, wait just a moment.”

They had reached the end of the street—a street which terminated in the open fields—and Nancy pushed open the gate of the house in front of which they had paused. They groped their way up a narrow gravel path to the stuccoed front of the little villa. There was no light shining from any of the windows. Only the outline of the building was dimly visible, rising out of a desert of immature garden. Beyond was the untouched country, a dark, uneven chaos, with a few trees close at hand standing up like black sentinels.

“Any one living here?” the young man whispered.

She nodded.

“A retired colonel. He is father’s tenant. I came down with a note this morning about some alterations, but no one answered the bell, so I strolled around and just glanced in at this window—this side one here. Step softly on the grass border. Now, have you any matches? Don’t say you haven’t, for goodness’ sake! I quite forgot that it would be dark.”

“I’ve plenty of matches, all right,” Lionel Cutts assured her, drawing a box from his pocket. “Supposing any one sees us hanging around here, though?”

“That’s all right,” she answered briskly. “I left the note in the letter box this morning, and I’ve come for an answer. Just strike a match and look in through the window. I want you to see it just as I did.”

It was a dark night, but windless, and the match, when once kindled, burned steadily. The young man held it close to the window and peered into a plainly furnished but comfortable little dining room. At first he could distinguish nothing except a white cloth upon the table; but by degrees he saw other things.

The cloth was laid for a meal, which had apparently been hastily abandoned.

An empty decanter lay upon its side, and across the tablecloth was a dark stream of red wine. A glass by the side of the vacant place was still half filled. There was a barely touched cutlet upon the plate, and a napkin thrown in a heap upon a vegetable dish.

On the floor, beside the table, lay an overturned chair on which the diner had evidently been sitting. The cloth had been dragged a little askew, and, staring at the two visitors with eyes like points of fire and tail lifted straight into the air, was a tortoiseshell cat. It was mewing loudly and scratching the floor with its paws.

“What do you make of that?” the girl whispered. “It’s just as it was this morning.”

“Some one’s done a skidoo in a hurry,” Mr. Cutts observed, lighting another match. “I wonder,” he added, his practical mind for the moment triumphing, “why the cat hasn’t eaten the cutlet?”

The cat’s red tongue shot out as it moved slowly toward them.

It was at this precise moment that fear entered into the souls of both Lionel Cutts and Nancy Grey. It came from some hidden source and for some unexplained reason, but it took an irresistible hold upon them. The scene upon which the young man had glanced with the idlest curiosity became suddenly invested with a dim and creeping horror. There was something around them, something near, which was terrifying. He struggled against it bravely, but his throat became dry and his knees began to shake.

Then his companion spoke, and he knew that the same feeling of terror had come to her, too. Her voice sounded faint and tremulous.

“Looks odd, doesn’t it?” she faltered. “It was just like that this morning. I’ve been making believe about it all day. One might fancy—almost anything.”

“Almost anything!” he echoed, lighting another match and trying to

believe that his fingers were trembling because of the cold. "Isn't there a servant or any one in the house?"

"One was to come to-morrow, he told father," she replied. "He seemed proud of being able to do everything for himself just for a day or two—said he was an old campaigner. He must have gone away in a hurry. Don't let's stay here any longer!"

An immense relief seized upon the soul of Lionel Cutts at his companion's suggestion; yet he remained for a moment motionless. Just inside the room the blazing eyes of the cat seemed to grow larger and larger. With arched back and wide open mouth, she stood as close to the window as she could get, marking time with her paws and mewling more loudly than ever. Lionel Cutts forgot his surroundings.

"Hang that cat!" he muttered, more than ever conscious of the moisture upon his forehead.

"Let's go!" the girl begged, tugging at his arm and urging him to leave the uncanny spot. "We'll make up stories about this on the way home."

Although his knees shook, and although the thought of a rapid flight toward the lights and sounds of the electric car was like a dream of happiness, Lionel knew quite well that the moment for it had passed.

"There may be—a real story," he answered. "That cat is crying for help. Let's look in the other downstairs room."

She caught him convulsively by the arm.

"It's silly," she faltered, "but I don't want to. I'm afraid! I want to get away, back to the lights. I want to run as fast as I can!"

"So do I, like the devil," he groaned; "but we can't do it. Come along!"

IV

LIONEL led the way, shaking a little, but moving steadily forward. On the other side of the front door was an-

other room, corresponding in size with the one into which they had been looking. They stole up to it on tiptoe. It, too, was uncurtained and blank.

Cutts struck a match, held it down for a moment until the flame burned clearly, and then turned it up. Its light was sufficient. They saw into the room. The girl tried to shriek, but her voice broke piteously, and the sound that came was no more than a cracked and discordant whisper.

As for her companion, a curious thing happened. The terror of a few seconds ago fell away from him. He found his brain working, his muscles tingling for action. How best could he help?—for help seemed sorely needed.

On the floor, near the middle of the room, bound hand and foot with cruel cords, lay an elderly gentleman. His face was ghastly white, the veins were standing out upon his forehead, there were specks of blood upon his lips. His eyes were protruding, and their stare was almost like the stare of the dead. A few feet away from him another man was kneeling before a small safe. This individual's hands were clasped on the top of his head, he was swaying backward and forward, muttering to himself—and he was as black as jet.

"It's the elephant rider from the circus!" Miss Grey faltered.

Lionel's plan of campaign was already settled. Having tried the window and found it fastened, he rained a hurricane of blows upon the panes with his ash stick. Then, finding a place free of broken glass, he placed his hand firmly upon the sash, and, with a skill acquired from practicing over counters in his spare moments, he vaulted into the room of tragedy.

"What the devil's going on here?" he cried.

There was no reply. The man who lay upon the floor made weak but ineffectual efforts to expel the clumsily fashioned gag from his mouth. The elephant rider rose to his feet, without

undue haste, and came slowly across the room. He walked with a curious noiselessness. The veneer of civilization acquired with his European clothes seemed to have fallen away from him. There was a ferocity in his eyes, a threat in his very silence, alike terrifying. Lionel Cutts was miserably conscious of an immense inferiority of size and muscle. He gripped his ash stick firmly, but he felt like a pygmy defying a giant.

"What's the meaning of this?" he demanded, his voice weakening.

There was no answer. The elephant rider leaned forward. Cutts struck at him fiercely, but, though the blow fell upon his head, the African never winced. With a sudden movement he seized Lionel in his arms, and the two swayed backward and forward in an uneven struggle.

Peering at them through the dim light, the girl, who had followed her escort into the room, began to scream. The African's long fingers had closed upon the young man's throat, and very slowly he commenced to strangle his victim. Cutts, almost from the first, was in desperate straits. He was in the hands of a man of twice his physical strength—a man, too, who seemed fired with a homicidal fury. He felt the cruel fingers burning at his throat, the hideous choking, the beginning of the black darkness.

The girl rushed toward them, but suddenly she paused. The bound man upon the floor was trying to make her understand something. He was looking toward his pockets. She dropped on her knees by his side. When she stood up, for the first time in her life she held a little revolver. She looked at it and felt for the trigger. The colonel nodded eagerly.

Once more she hastened across the room. Cutts was helpless. The African lifted his limp body and seemed about to dash it upon the floor. Nancy's hand shook, and red fire danced before her eyes. She dared not aim, but sud-

denly she pressed the revolver against the body of the African and pulled the trigger desperately—once, twice, three times. Then she ran away, shrieking and wringing her hands.

The room was full of smoke and hideous with the cries of the wounded man. Cutts sat on the floor, leaning against the wall, slowly recovering his breath. His face was black and his eyes staring.

"My God!" he sobbed. "My God!"

It was the girl's turn now, and her courage, too, arrived in this moment of trial. First of all she lit a candle, and then, with a knife, which she fetched from the dining room, she cut the cords from the bound man. She held wine to his lips, and passed it on to Lionel Cutts.

All the time the elephant rider lay groaning upon the floor, his breathing becoming fainter and fainter. At first he had rolled from side to side, but now he was almost still. The girl scarcely once glanced in his direction, but she was deeply concerned.

"Do you think I have killed him?" she moaned.

"Thundering good job if you have!" the colonel exclaimed. "Thank Heaven for your pluck, little girl! That brute kept me here for nearly twenty-four hours, waiting for me to give him the combination to unlock my safe!"

"What is it? Jewels?" Lionel Cutts asked, as he staggered to his feet.

The colonel drew a long breath. Then he groped his way across the room, adjusted the lock with shaking fingers, and opened the door of the safe. Upon the iron shelf within was a small black image, and around its neck, hanging from a thread of gold wire, a single pearl.

"I brought it back from a temple in Central Africa," he explained. "They told me there'd be trouble, but I never dreamed they'd reach me here."

They all looked at the image, which seemed to be fashioned of some jet-black metal. The body was the body

of a woman, the face hideous, yet fascinating.

"Some day I'll tell you the story," the colonel promised. "Just at present I've had enough of the thing."

He closed up the safe.

"I think," Cutts remarked, picking up his hat, "that we'll be going."

The colonel nodded.

"Can't talk to you to-night," he groaned. "Call at the police station, will you, and tell them about this carcass? I'm going to lie down."

They stole out of the house. They held each other tightly all the way down the half lit road. The horror of the night seemed to have afflicted them with a sort of mental paralysis. They scarcely spoke.

"Where is the police station?" Lionel asked hoarsely.

"I'll stop the tram," she faltered.

They came out into the lights. He drew a great breath of relief. The rattle of an electric car sounded like music.

"We don't need to make believe about to-night!" he muttered.

A month later, on the occasion of Lionel Cutts's next journey to Norwich, Miss Nancy Grey and he dined with Colonel Ransome at the Grand Hotel. They had all become normal again, though the horror of that memorable night had left behind it a certain effect. It was a very pleasant dinner,

and the colonel talked for some time of his wanderings in Africa and his many remarkable adventures there. Finally, toward the close of the evening, he touched upon the one subject which, until then, they had managed to avoid.

"I've presented that idol to the British Museum," he said, "and I've sold the pearl. Pretty valuable it was, too! The first jeweler I showed it to gave me a thousand pounds for it. And now, you two young people," he went on, "I'd like to tell you both what I am going to do with that thousand pounds."

Miss Grey, who was really an exceedingly practical young woman, nodded with an air of keen interest.

"I've invested it for the present," the colonel continued, "and it's going to be handed over as a dowry to the first young lady of my acquaintance of whose matrimonial plans I approve. Don't happen to know of any one, do you, Miss Nancy?"

For a moment she sat quite still. There was a shade of pink in her cheeks. Lionel Cutts coughed.

"We thought some time next autumn, sir," he remarked. "I am to have a small share in the business then."

"Congratulate you both!" the colonel declared heartily. "It's just the answer I was hoping for. The money's ready any time!"



THE WAY

THE way is fair enough to me;
The wood, the heather, and the sea;
The sky is blue—
I do not miss you now until
I reach that turn upon the hill
Where I met you
Day after day—
But there I stand and do not see the way.

Thalun Eames

Sea Drift



Kiki waved to the man on the derelict

Ambergris, the gold of the sea, is a deadly lure, but it led Sam Hawkins to something infinitely more precious

By John Hunter



WHEN "Bull" Stormont was thrown out of Kitty Levack's place in Sydney harbor, he was not as drunk as either Kitty or her bouncer supposed.

Kitty, by the way, was no beauty. She tipped the beam at two hundred pounds and had an unerring aim with a pint mug, as many a broken-headed seaman could testify. Her bouncer was an oversize male edition of herself, who carried a sleeping draught in each hand and foot, and was possessed of a callous disregard

for the feelings of anybody save his Napoleonic mistress.

When Kitty said: "Bill — drop him!" Bill dropped him good and hard — usually on the wharf.

Kitty would not stand for drunks. She did not mind men getting merry. She did not object to singing, and she liked a dance; but dead solid drunkenness, the kind that settled a man in a heap in a corner, bereft of the use of arms, legs and mentality, Kitty found abominable in her sight. When such phenomena presented themselves Bill was usually instructed to "drop him."

Bill dropped Stormont on a starlit evening when the Southern Cross was blazing in the heavens; and after the bouncer had gone inside, Stormont got to his feet and walked away soberly.

He knew all about the Mary Ann Trinder. Dirk Koek, her Dutch skipper, had come back to Sydney on a French packet, full of explanations and excuses for deserting her with his crew of three somewhere in the islands.

"Off Soraya, it was," he said. "Tam her blaster eyes! Sprung the leak, she did, and got an 'ell of a list to starb'd. Yes. Squareface for me—neat. Hope she tam well sinks. I'm going into steam."

All Sydney knew of the deserting of the Mary Ann Trinder; but what all Sydney did not know was what had become of young Sam Hawkins, Koek's mate.

"Him?" sniffed Dirk, when questioned. "Tavy Jones, most like. Tam goot jop, too. Landlubber—tha's what he was."

Well—Sam Hawkins was gone, like many another good seaman. The Mary Ann Trinder was either foundered or drifting derelict on the sun-kissed seas. And then Bull Stormont, half dozing in Kitty Levack's place, heard the two men talking. A glance from under down-dropped lids showed him that one of the men was a member of Dirk Koek's crew.

"Ambergris it was," said the fellow, whose name was Trent. "Ambergris. I seen it with my own adjectival eyes. All slimy, streaked like marble. And smell! Holy Christopher! Like a blasted scent shop."

He drank his tot and his companion refilled his glass.

"Young Hawkins found it," continued Trent. "He brought it aboard in an old sack—staggering. And he wasn't no chicken, believe me. He found it on the beach, half a mile below Van Cleve's place, at Soraya. Know Van Cleve? Him what suddenly seemed to go daft and married that native girl Malou, good and proper. They've got a kid now, and that Malou's as happy as you'll see. Can't figure it myself."

The other man grunted. "What

about the ambergris?"

"It's still on the Mary Ann Trinder," said Trent.

"And she's at the bottom of the sea, shipmate."

"Not on your sweet and gentle life. Listen here. Sam Hawkins gets this stuff aboard. If it weighed an ounce it weighed a hundredweight."

"What?"

"A blooming hundredweight. How many quids an ounce is it?"

"Lord knows! It's a fortune."

"Of course. Dirk Koek knew it, too. And that same night he chucked a knife at Hawkins as Hawkins was passing the mainmast. I see it myself. There was death on that ship from the minute that there ambergris come aboard—murder!"

"I watched Hawkins. He was a quiet lad, very grim. You know the sort. Now the whys and wherefores ain't clear to me. But I'll put it to you. I was outside the galley—I was cook—when I sees Hawkins dive below with a damn great auger in his hand. Hours later we find the ship's got a list, and is making water. Hawkins starts a panic, shouting, yelling, and all manner of things. Dirk Koek's boozed to the eyes, and Hawkins, what was mate, outboards a boat and shoved Dirk into it. We tumbles in after him, and, somehow, in the dark, the boat gets cast off—leaving Hawkins alone on the schooner. Dirk's a singing a song in the bottom of the boat and don't know whether he's at sea or attending communion service.

"Now I ask you, as man to man, did Hawkins spring that there leak? Did Hawkins know where to dive into the swimming hold and find it and stop it? And did he do it because he knew he'd never make shore alive if he didn't get rid of Dirk and—" Trent broke off.

His companion grinned. "And the rest of you, eh?"

"Maybe. I didn't figure out about the auger till the Mary Ann Trinder

was out of our sight. Then it come to me kind of sudden, if you understand. But it was too late then, and we was picked up two hours later by the French packet and brought straight here.

"I'm guessing that the old Mary Ann's somewhere out near Soraya yet. She had shipped tons of water, and it ain't no mean job for a single pair of hands to pump clear that lot. Now suppose anybody got on to her and Hawkins? Suppose the boat was found! Besides, there's been a typhoon blowing since. Hawkins had had his hands full. If it wasn't for the ambergris I'd wish him foundered."

All this went through Bull Stormont's memory as, immense, muscular, tough, he lurched along the quayside. Off the quay he saw Kitty Levack's boat, a thirty foot hurricane decked craft, built for weather.

He stood and thought; then he slipped into the water and swam out to her. There was drink aboard, and food. Half an hour later he was standing to the open sea—heading for Soraya.

II

THE white men she had met had called her "Kiki"—borrowing the name from French farces—and it had stuck to her.

She first saw the schooner when, having been caught in a canoe by the westward edge of the typhoon and blown far from her home, she was beginning to summon to her aid all the gods she knew and resign herself to their keeping.

The schooner was down by the head, and both her sticks were gone. There was a man hacking a tangle of gear away from her side, and he straightened himself and looked across the swinging seas as Kiki got to her feet and waved her arms about.

He waved back. Kiki, picking up her paddle, worked desperately for a quarter of an hour, to be hauled at last,

in a state of collapse, to the tilted roof of the derelict.

She hung in her rescuer's arms and sobbed.

"I nearly dead," she said. "Big wind come. Sweep Kiki away. You save me."

"Betcher life," said the man, and, holding her out at arm's length, looked at her.

There was a roguish beauty in Kiki's brown face, real deep beauty in the lustrous black of her hair—and life and deliciousness in her clean-limbed body. Save for a couple of necklaces—one of shark's teeth, the other of beads, and a few flowers in her hair—her clothing was hardly noticeable; but, somehow, that did not seem to offend. There was a delight in it. It was a naïve evidence of utter simplicity. She might have been a baby girl, round-limbed and innocent.

"What you want," said the man, "is a drop of the real stuff. We'll see if old Koek left any before his last booze up. Come on."

He picked the girl up in his arms and carried her aft, down the companionway into what had been the skipper's cabin. There was considerable disorder in that cabin. Dirk Koek had not been a tidy man, either in drink or out of it, and what he had not attended to the typhoon had completed.

Lying in a corner was an old sack, filled with a precious waxy substance from which perfumes are made.

"Here you are, Kiki. Swallow this."

Kiki was conscious of fire in her throat, fire which made her cough and pant, and of instant quickening in her pulses.

"You damn kind," she said. She had learned her English on the beaches. "What name belong you?"

"Sam Hawkins. I'm mate of this craft—and all that's left of its gallant crew. She's some tub, I'll tell the world. I made a leak in her, stopped it, got to pumping, and then the ty-

phoon came and busted the whole caboodle. We lost our sticks—the old girl and I—in the first blow, and that just about saved us, I guess, for we were carrying some rags. I've stopped the leak again, but we're in a sad mess."

Kiki sniffed.

"That ambergris?" she asked, pointing to the corner.

"Sure thing. Cause of all the trouble, Kiki. Know anything about it?"

"White men like to find it. It smells wonderful."

She looked him over. He was strong-limbed, bronzed, with a great muscular neck showing above his open shirt. He was perhaps ten years older than she was, and had brown curly hair and quiet brown eyes.

"Me like you. You a proper man. Me stay long you and help."

Sam nodded. "Suppose so. Bit of a problem, Kiki—your staying here."

She cocked her head to one side and looked puzzled. She was not quite sure what he meant.

"What about grub?" he added. "Hungry?"

"Sure as hell," she said.

He fished for food, and then sat down with her.

"Listen, Kiki. You're a pretty kid. And you look like a fine clean kid. I guess you are. Now you don't want to get saying them words. They're for beach combers. Get me? When I ask if you're hungry you get almighty polite and say—'I would like something to eat, thanks.' See? 'Sure as hell' ain't ladylike. Not a bit. And you're a lady—one of nature's. That's the way I look at it, anyhow. You can help yourself to pickles, if you like. It's all free on this packet."

Kiki ate and talked and laughed. She liked Sam Hawkins.

For two days they worked, Kiki taking her turn at the pump and slogging away like a real little Trojan, as Sam said—although what a Trojan was he did not know, as he explained

to Kiki when she asked him about it.

At the end of the second day Kiki discovered something—something about herself of which she had been previously unaware.

They were going down the companionway. Sam was in front. Kiki, behind him, slipped, cried out, and fell right into Sam's arms as he turned swiftly. He held her for a second, and she lay close against him. Then he set her down.

"You'll break your neck if you don't mind," he said. "And then I shan't have a shipmate, Kiki."

Kiki did not answer. She drew back from him, and her eyes were large, watching him—disturbed, a little frightened. The beads were heaving on her bosom. She did not speak all through the meal, but kept shooting secret glances at Sam. Afterward she stole away by herself and cried—and wondered.

From that moment she looked at Sam differently, without any childishness in her eyes—softly, but still wonderingly.

On the morning of the fourth day Bull Stormont came aboard.

III

THE Mary Ann Trinder had drifted with the sea drift, and had lifted an island—one of the thousands which dot those sunlit seas. It was but a small island, perhaps a mile long by the same distance across, an atoll, tree-covered, lacking the lagoon of its coral neighbors.

"We're going to do something here," said Sam. "We're going to drop the hook and go ashore in your canoe and cut down the nicest tree we can find and rig some kind of jury-mast. Then we'll try and make Soraya. Old Van Cleve's been a reformed character since he married that gal Malou, and I guess he'll help us out."

"Yes, Sam," said Kiki sadly.

She did not want to make Soraya—nor anywhere else. She wanted to go

on—sea drift—all her life, with Sam in the schooner, so that she could sit and watch him, admire him and hide in her breast that wonderful secret she had discovered on the day she fell into his arms.

He put his hand on her shoulder and gave her softly tinted flesh a little squeeze.

"And then we'll put across the ambergris, Kiki, and it's us for the high lights, I guess. A ship of my own. That's the ticket, eh? How'd you like to know a real brassbound skipper, what touched his peaked hat to you every time he saw you? Guess that'd be swell, eh?"

"Real swell, Sam," she murmured.

"Here—what are you bawling for? We don't stand for tears on this packet, Kiki. What's got you?"

"Nothing, Sammy. I'm just a silly kid. That's all."

He stared at her and shook his head. "I don't place you," he said. "Never did place gals much. Hello!"

He had seen Stormont's boat, and ten minutes later, his clothing stiff with brine, Stormont was on the deck telling a tale of a foundered ship and an only survivor. Stormont was haggard-eyed and dog-weary. He had cruised for the outside of a week in those waters until he began to think that his quest was hopeless. His voice was harsh and cracked. He suffered from lack of drink and food. But in his eyes lurked a dreadful malignancy.

Kiki stood back. These white men would talk between themselves. She was only a little native girl, and must be thrust aside. But every time she looked at Stormont she felt a shuddering thrill run through her. After all, she was feminine, and had her instincts. She feared the newcomer from the second she saw his face.

Stormont went below. Kiki, staying on deck, heard the two men talking, as she stopped by the open skylight. Stormont casually mentioned the ambergris. Hawkins showed it him.

Kiki's pulses quickened. What a big simple fool that Sam was—to reveal his wealth to a chance stranger!

She had always slept in the after cabin, and, until the ship had been pumped clear, Sam had slept on deck. That night the arrangement held. The two men stayed on deck. Kiki could have burst into tears when she saw the insolent surprise in Stormont's eyes as Hawkins explained the system to him. She knew what Stormont was thinking.

She could not sleep. The white men's God, of whom she had heard but vaguely and whom she conceived as a kind of general officer commanding the little army of deities she had been taught to worship, probably leaned down from his heaven and warded sleep from her.

So, lying wide awake in her bunk, she heard a swift, alarmed cry, a heavy thud—and was conscious of the awful silence which followed it. She lifted herself, trembling. She did not run up the companionway, but, standing on the table, she got a grip of the edge of the skylight and pulled herself up till her eyes were just above deck level.

She saw Bull Stormont toss a piece of wood into the sea and look down at the motionless form of Sam Hawkins.

The girl dropped back, light and silent as a cat, and, standing in the cabin's darkness, knotted together the strings of her destiny in a few moments of swift thought.

Moments passed—long moments, tense moments, moments supercharged with throbbing fear.

She heard naked feet pattering on the companionway. With a leap, she was into the bunk and covered up, her eyes closed.

"Hi—you!" It was Stormont's voice. She heard the scrape of a match. He was lighting the swinging lamp above the table.

She sat up, rubbing her eyes. Then, swiftly: "What you want?"

She asked the question breathlessly. Stormont, staring at her, read what he thought were her fears.

He was cunning—Stormont—and he dubbed her a wayward, innocent child, who might be taught something interesting, were a man disposed that way. He reckoned with her not at all. She could be brushed aside by a sweep of his immense calloused hand.

Yet he was up against elemental cunning, the cunning of the wild creatures; and he was up against the strongest instinct in the world, the instinct which prompts the female to protect that which it loves.

Kiki had waited for a heavy splash, but no heavy splash had come. She felt as though her heart would burst with thankfulness. Sam Hawkins still lay senseless on the deck above. The rest was with her. She knew it. The white men's God had shown her the way and given her a start.

IV

STORMONT looked round. "Here! Where's that ambergris?" he demanded.

Kiki shook her head.

"That stuff belong Sam?" she asked. "Sam take him away just before I go to bed. Say he hide him."

"Eh?" Stormont stared around him. "Hide him be damned! What do you mean?"

Kiki trembled. "I not know. That stuff belong along Sam. What name you ask for it? He hide him. He tell me. That's all."

Stormont raved at her. He began to search the cabin. Kiki sat in the bunk and watched him, and kept the clothes huddled about her.

At last: "Good job I didn't heave him overboard. Hid it—has he? I'll hide him. When he comes round he'll tell me where it is or I'll show him a trick the Chinese taught me."

Stormont stood by the table and looked at her.

"You're a pretty kid," he said, more

gently. "When I'm through with this I'd like to talk to you."

Kiki smiled at him. She never knew where she got that smile from—but it was a perfectly natural smile, and it set Stormont's blood atingling.

"Sam—he slow," she said, and managed to keep her voice steady.

Stormont turned to the door, winking before he turned. Kiki slipped from the bunk and came after him.

"What d'you want?" he asked.

"Want to see Sam," explained Kiki. "See if he got a real bang on the head belong him."

"You bet he has," grinned Stormont. The girl went up after him. She had to see Sam, to make sure he was not dead. She wanted to drop beside him and lift his head. She had a most amazing inclination to stoop, to fling herself upon him and kiss him. But she stood back and examined him critically.

"Pretty much hurt," Kiki said.

"Oh—him. Tough as they make 'em. Be all right in the morning, bar a fat head; and I've had plenty of them, I'll tell you. I'll tie him up."

She watched Stormont tie Sam up, then she turned toward the companionway.

"Where'll I kip?" asked Stormont.

She looked over her shoulder and laughed at him.

"Me sleep along cabin. You sleep along deck," she said.

He laughed with her. She was a jolly kid—knowing, too. Sam was real slow—dead slow. Lord! What a fool the fellow was! Didn't deserve to keep his blessed ambergris.

Stormont was conscious of overwhelming tiredness, a tiredness Kiki knew must overtake him; for she had read the signs in his eyes and his face when he came aboard. He took a last careful look at the bonds which bound the unconscious Hawkins, and then, finding a sheltered place forward, he dropped into sound, heavy sleep.

An hour passed. Kiki moved. She

crept to the deck and looked at Sam. He was showing no signs of returning consciousness.

Carefully she tiptoed back to the cabin and there stripped back the covering from her bed. The efforts she had made to lift the one hundred and twelve pounds of ambergris from the corner of the cabin into her bed were as nothing to the efforts she now had to make if she wished to take one more step toward saving the life of Sam.

She twisted the loose sacking round her hands and heaved. The mass swung clear, went over her shoulder and nearly staggered her backward to the floor. She reeled against the table, and the noise of it sounded like thunder in her ears. She stood still, listening, every fiber quivering with fright.

Then she made her way toward the steps up to the deck. The veins stood on her temples like whipcords. Her legs felt as though they would collapse under her with every stride. Halfway up the companionway she had to stop and rest the weight on the steps above, while she drew breath in great gulps. But at last she made the deck.

Her chest felt as though it would burst. She went to the port side, and, below, saw her canoe swinging idly on the line by which Sam had fastened it that afternoon. There was a generous length of the line lying coiled on the deck by her feet.

She allowed her knees to bend, dropped, and then carefully lowered the great weight to the wood. Fastening the rope about it was a difficult task; but she did it at last with knots sailors had shown her, and then put the rope around her body.

After that she heaved the ambergris over the bulwarks, took the sudden weight of it with braced feet, and, loosening the line, gently paid it out, careful not to upset the little craft.

The ambergris dropped slowly into the middle of the canoe, which only rocked a little. Kiki took a deep, relieved breath and worked fast. She

shinned over the side and cast the line off the sacking and from around her.

As she did this she heard a loud yawn. Stormont was awake!

Kiki crouched in the canoe for a space, then dragged a section of old sailcloth over the sack. After that she carefully lifted herself, got a hold, and pulled herself to the bulwarks. She could see Stormont very dimly. He was sitting up with his back to her, rubbing his eyes.

The girl dropped to her face on the deck, wormed her way toward the companionway, and slid down it. She bolted her door after her.

V

WITH the first flush of dawn she was awake and on deck, to find Stormont standing over Sam Hawkins, who, very white and wan, was sitting with his back against the bulwarks. Fear had kept the girl in her cabin all night, and had prevented her from putting into execution the last part of her plan, but now she saw a way.

Her eyes rested on Sam's face. She tried to send a message by them, and hoped she succeeded. But Sam was dazed, and looked silly. She was afraid he had not understood.

"Me fetch fresh water," she said to Stormont. "Maybe Sam get well if fresh water come along. Plenty on the island."

She was at the side and over into the canoe before he could answer. He shouted to her as she pushed off, but she did not heed his shout. When she paddled shoreward he seated himself astern and watched her go.

There was a wooded point below the schooner, and the tide run was set that way. Kiki managed to drop her paddle into the water, and leaned out after it. Actually, she secured it, but at that distance Stormont could not see this. So the tide run took her round the point and out of his sight.

Directly she was hidden from him she began to paddle furiously, beached

the canoe, and jumped to the sand. After minutes of strenuous work, she carried the ambergris across the fore-shore and dumped it among the undergrowth; then she searched for water.

She returned to find Stormont catechizing Sam.

"D'you hear? If you don't come across I'll light a little fire on your face. Ever seen that done? I see it in China. It hurts cruel bad."

Sam looked a little puzzled. He was evidently recovering with some rapidity from the blow on his head. Kiki put down the little keg in which she had fetched the water and drew back. She was standing behind Stormont and she waved her hands expressively. Sam was looking at her, but his eyes did not show that he realized her signals.

She walked away, down the companion. When she came on deck again she had Dirk Koek's clasp knife in her hand and slid up under her forearm.

Stormont was dashing water at Sam. "Daft, are you?" he rasped. "Can't talk, eh? Got noises in your block, have you? Try this! And this!"

Kiki wandered to the side of the schooner, the unconsidered nonentity in the little drama. She unfastened the line which held Stormont's boat alongside, and then walked forward.

Stormont straightened himself from his ministrations with the water and drove his boot into Sam's side.

"Now speak!" he snarled.

Kiki cried: "The boat belong along you! He sail away! Look!"

From her position forward she pointed an excited finger. Stormont wheeled round with an oath. His boat was several fathoms away from the schooner, and that boat was his only link with civilization, for the derelict schooner could not make any port.

For a moment he glared at Kiki with suspicion; but she was the schooner's length away from where the boat had been tied. He turned and saw her canoe alongside.

"Go and get it!" he commanded her. "Into that canoe with you."

She shook her head. "Kiki no sail boats. Kiki not understand them at all. Besides, Kiki not want to go."

His boat was in the tide run, traveling quickly. There was no time to stop and argue with her. He snapped: "I'll deal with you when I get back, my girl." He dropped into the canoe and fell to paddling like mad.

Instantly, Kiki was at Sam's side and cut him free.

"That ambergris," she said. "I hide him. I knew he keep you alive till it was found. I tell him you hide it. It's on the beach now. I take it ashore just this minute. Now you wait for him come back."

Sam looked at her. "By God, Kiki, you're some gal," he said. "Get me a whisky and I'll give him all he wants."

And when Stormont ran his boat alongside and climbed laboriously to the deck, he saw only one thing, the sudden uplifted form of Hawkins standing over him. Then the marlin-spike crashed downward and Stormont dropped back to his boat's deck.

VI

KIRRY LEVACK'S thirty-foot boat, watered and provisioned luxuriously from the schooner's stores, was running south for Sydney. She had touched at Soraya *en route*, early of a golden morning before anybody was about, and her crew of two had dumped a bound man right in line with Van Cleve's front door, where he was certain to be found.

Sam Hawkins was steering the boat, with Kiki sitting at his feet.

Sam said: "Kiki. Ever thought of getting married—real and proper—to a seafaring man?"

She looked up at him, whereupon Sam, dimly understanding, saw, for the first time in his life, the sun rise in a girl's eyes.

For all of Kiki's dreams had suddenly come true!

Musical Comedies

*A dramatic critic surveys the current crop of
New York's colorful and tuneful eye
and ear entertainments*

By Gilbert W. Gabriel

Portrait Drawings by Rafael



Evelyn Herbert in "The New Moon"



Marie Saxon in "Ups-a-Daisy"

THIS expects to be a cheerful account of the best things to see, hear, and hum when you visit the theater district of New York. And this, in turn, presents difficulty number one; for there have not yet been a great many best things in this season, and most of the few best

things have been musical comedies. The drama may not have gone entirely to the bowwows, but it certainly has surrendered to song and dance.

There is probably some sound, dollar-and-sense reason for so many musical comedies—and for such comparatively good ones. They cost ten or fifteen times as much to produce as does

the averagely plain play; but then the risk of failure is only half so great. You would probably roll out of your rocking chair to know how enormous that risk is, and how few new ventures on the New York stage pay their producers anything like a fair and businesslike return.

Appearances — and press agents — are deceiving. A musical comedy may run for a full year on Broadway, as one that I have in mind has done, with continuous salvos to its success, and at

the end of that time may still be writing its history into a private ledger in red ink. Of course this is all for the sake of being able to print on its billboards, when the show begins its out-of-town tour, the magical phrase, "A Full Year in New York." Such statements are often sheer luxuries, and come high.

Excuse this excursion into the seamy side of playdom. I believe in art for the public's sake, not for the producers', even more fiercely than you do. I



Bobbie Perkins in "Animal Crackers"



Polly Walker in "Billie"

am only wondering aloud how they can afford to present us with so many huge, extravagant and thrilling musical comedies—and why, in consequence, musical comedies are the best contribution America has made to the theater world.

Higher brows than mine have been creased by the same wonder. I remember how Jacques Copeau, the eminent French stage director and probably the strictest purist of the European stage,

when he was here to impress a play of his upon the Theater Guild, would always love to play truant and steal off to some utterly commonplace but racy, rich, merry-minded musical show.

He declared that here was the real expression of the American at play, the American in love and in luxury, American wit and romance. Here, he told me, and up no other more solemn or sober alley of our art, were ourselves brought home to ourselves in our easi-



Odette Myrtil in "White Lilacs"

est and gayest style.

Abroad—in London of this year and last, for instance—they have pronounced pretty much of the same sentence. When we export to them our most honored spoken plays, they receive them usually with the chill politeness due a respectable but none too welcome guest. When we lug over some big, bouncing musical comedy like "Show Boat" or "Good News," they greet it with roars of glee that can be heard in Constantinople and Los

Angeles. These large, up-boiling extravaganzas are the true America to Londoners—and to New Yorkers, too.

Well, then, what of the newest of them? What of "Animal Crackers," "Ups-a-Daisy," "The New Moon," "Three Cheers," "Treasure Girl," and the twenty-odd other entertainments which have lately been throwing us all into chuckles and cheers? Let's go.

The lucky tide of them began, perhaps, with "Good Boy." A case-hardened musical comedy producer once

told me that every successful show of such sort has simply got to make its plot a variation on the "Cinderella" legend. This "Good Boy," as its name implies, has a male *Cinderella*—a country youth who comes to the big city to make his name and fame and fortune on the stage. Incidentally, of course, he will also find the right girl there.

It is all tuneful and colorful, brave and sufficiently pure. There are Helen Kane and Eddie Buzzell among its young ones. There is also the gravest and drollest and—for me—one of the funniest comedians on this funny earth, Charles Butterworth.

But, after all, the most novel thing about "Good Boy" is the way it is staged. Two treadmills, running in opposite directions, carry its cut-outs of scenery on and off before your eyes in a steady stream. Also they carry the actors. Imagine the brightness of a trick which gives you the effect of the poor, footsore hero trudging miles and miles uptown, past shops and rubbish cans, hydrants and street corners, and other such flowing suggestions of the sidewalks of New York!

Another show you'd surely like is "Hold Everything!" This excessively athletic title advertises a very vehement lark about prize fighters, their managers, their lady friends, and their championship mauling matches.

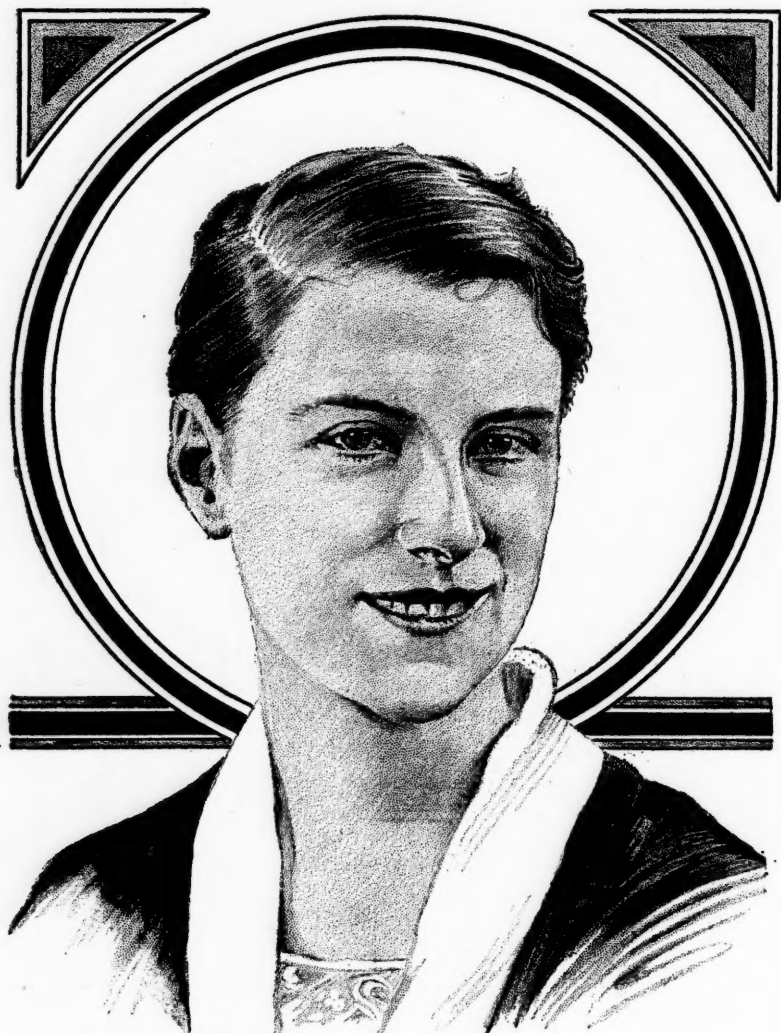
We have had two non-musical melodramas in New York already this season about the same prize fighters. They have come and gone. Even the distinguished presence of Jack Dempsey in the flesh could not keep one of them with us for long. It turns out to be a great deal easier to swallow

this fisticuff custard when they pour a musical sauce on it.

But "Hold Everything!" would still be a swift, swallowtail lot of fun even if it were all about street cleaners, instead of prize fighters. It has an expert and handsome pack of entertainers in it—the always darling Ona Munson, for instance, the even more polished



Dorothy Stone in "Three Cheers"



Beatrice Lillie in "This Year of Grace"

good looks of Betty Compton, and—for comedians—the plump Victor Moore and one Bert Lehr.

Mr. Lehr is a seasoned burlesquer, but he burst almost unknown upon those who go to musical comedies, and he bounced away with quite all the laughs and the honors of "Hold Everything!" He has a face of India rubber and eyes that seem always on the verge of rolling off the end of his nose, and his convulsions of arms and legs are gorgeously absurd.

Notice, I haven't gone in for much palaver about the music of these musical comedies, nor shall I. With only an occasional exception—the score of "Treasure Girl," for one—the music comes out of a Broadway grab bag and bothers nobody, attracts less than nobody, and is just to be taken for music. That is, for something that the principals can warble weakly, the choruses can dance to with great gusto, and that you can go away whistling for the quarter of an hour



Gertrude Lawrence in "Treasure Girl"

before your taxi is back at your house door.

One unfortunate operetta, "Chee-Chee," did have a perfect plenty of charming, witty, and distinguished music; but it also had one of the most mortifying plots in the catalogue of modern stage frankness, and Richard Rodgers's music proved of no avail.

So, as a rule, let's leave the music out of it. In the case of "The New Moon" we cannot. Not that Maestro Sigmund Romberg has done any

specially fine composing for "The New Moon"; but he has, he certainly has, done a vast amount of it, good, bad, or ordinary. "The New Moon" is, hence, a "romantic operetta." It all depends how much romantic operetta your system can take.

Of its sort and size, "The New Moon" is superlative. It is a magnificently costumed and back-dropped thing about old colonial New Orleans and the West Indies, with a historical story drenched in arias, choral num-



Ona Munson in "Hold Everything!"

bers, and naval battles. You will see and hear in it Evelyn Herbert, not so long ago a Chicago Opera star, now making the best of her young gifts in these more popular fields.

"Three Cheers" is a great show with a great tale behind it. This was to be Fred Stone's biggest and best. The famous comedian and his daughter Dorothy had had a happy time together of late years in "Criss Cross" and such; but down came Fred Stone in his airplane and broke his legs, and in his

place in "Three Cheers" came his old friend and fellow cowboy, Will Rogers. The cheers for Will Rogers, on the opening night in New York, were consequently three times three.

Where the remains of this particular entertainment would be without Will is nothing for you and me to worry about. The witty things he does in it—and with it—are our complete concern. Mr. Rogers sidles out between curtains, parks his chewing gum on the gilded proscenium, and lets fly with

the most razor-edged line of humor that ever cut whole, huge heaps of bunks into bits. He is not only a winning clown; he is also one of America's great satirists.

But then, too, there is Dorothy Stone. Putting it so casually as that is putting it unfairly; for Miss Stone is a prodigiously trained heroine, agile, resourceful, with a lightning grace about her when she leaps to the dance. This "Three Cheers" has altogether the best dancing of the year. Also, if this is an item you appreciate in musical comedy, it has the prettiest girls.

"Ups-a-Daisy" is a pleasant and vivacious one. Marie Saxon is in it, and of all the young persons who bring back the flowers of spring to my wintering imagination, Miss Saxon is my favorite.

Also, in the George M. Cohan show, "Billie"—which is, take it or leave it, the usual George M. Cohan show—there is the delightful young Polly Walker. Indeed, nowhere else on the map—I have a wistful English critic's word for it—do so many radiantly clever ingénues rejoice as in New York's musical comedies.



EYES

THE Moon is a distant maiden

Her chill wry smile?

No, brother, no—

A woman without wile,

Her cheeks aglow

Like the sails of a ship laden

With dreams from Dawn's rosy isle!

The Sun is a brazen miser

His bag of gold?

Wrong, brother, wrong—

A knight-errant glorioled

With love, a song

On his lips and his heart wiser

And bigger than Night's hands may hold!

Richard Butler Glaenzer



SACRAMENT

DAWN and the day both bring

A light divine—

Their holy offering

Of sacred wine.

Then, when the day has sped,

And its draft spent,

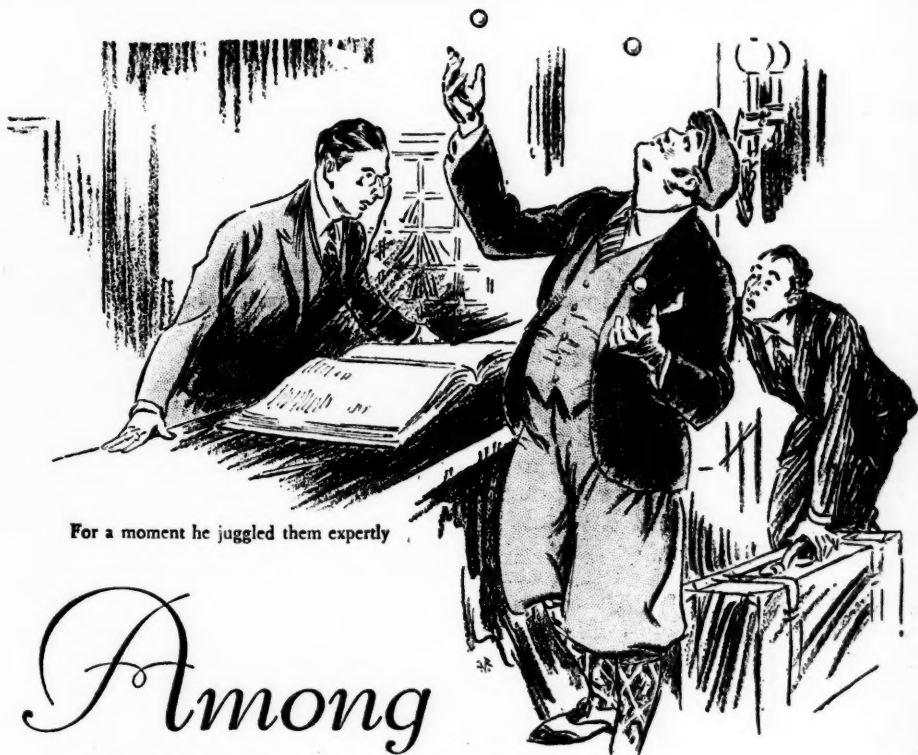
I have night's rest as bread

For sacrament!

Clinton Scollard

Show Business—By Trent





For a moment he juggled them expertly

Among Those Registered

*A great day in the life of Mr. Thomas Zephaniah
Hughes, desk clerk of the New Mack
Hotel, and amateur detective*

By Alan Mack



R. HUGHES, surveying himself in the mirror that hung behind the cashier's desk, smoothed his hair carefully with a well kept hand, adjusted the ribbon of his eyeglasses, and gave his bulldog a final affectionate pat on the head.

Strictly speaking—and Mr. Hughes would be the last man to speak any other way—there was no danger in patting the bulldog, for that ferocious animal was a tiny glass figure, painted black and white. With the aid of a long, sharp pin, it sat all day on Mr. Hughes's gray knitted cravat, just below the carefully adjusted knot, gazing

without change of expression at the amazed faces of transient guests. Strangers were not prepared to associate Mr. Hughes with bulldogs.

A sign, this bulldog—a sign of that flair for adventure which was revealed not only by Mr. Hughes's taste in tie ornaments, but also by the gardenia in the lapel of his neatly brushed dark blue coat and the black silk ribbon by means of which he retained close connection with his eyeglasses.

Mr. Hughes was anything but an egotist. Overbearing, haughty, brazen, notoriety loving—even his worst enemy, if he had one, could scarcely have applied any such adjectives to his character; but Mr. Hughes was romantic—incurably romantic. When he welcomed a patron to the New Mack Hotel—"Shirleyville's Finest Hostelry—Every Guest a Friend," the sign-board declared—his was all the enthusiasm of a desert sheik salaaming a stranger to his oasis. When one of the regulars came in—Ivey, who sold to Biggs & Son, general hardware and farm supplies, or Bascot, who furnished merchandise to Wetzel, the family outfitter—Mr. Hughes felt like the Biblical father greeting his prodigal son.

Decidedly, Mr. Hughes was an asset to the New Mack Hotel. To some of the regular guests he was more than an asset—he was an institution. Did Schultz wish to unfold a tale of marvelous adventure experienced in the pleasing company of certain ladies in the near-by city? Mr. Hughes would listen with enjoyment and applaud with flattering enthusiasm. Did Harvey wish to pat himself on the back and tell the world about a slick business deal he had just put over on old Hockmeyer, the williest merchant in town? Mr. Hughes would play the part of a listening world.

It was Schultz who first brought in the story about Senator Kable.

"Say," he told Mr. Hughes, as he critically examined the New Mack's

pen, preparatory to placing his slanting signature on the register, "them high muckety-mucks sure likes their good times, don't they?"

Mr. Hughes adjusted his eyeglasses the merest fraction of an inch.

"Perhaps," he agreed. "Just what particular high muckety-mucks do you have in mind?"

"Well," said Mr. Schultz, making a final flourish with the tail of the last letter of his name, "it's mighty funny about this here Kable."

"What's funny about this here Kable?" demanded Mr. Hughes, patting his bulldog on the head.

It must not be inferred that Mr. Hughes was careless with his speech. On the contrary, the elevator boy considered him too fastidious.

"High hat in his lingo," the elevator boy told the dining room servant; "but he means well."

"Disappearing the way he did," answered Mr. Schultz. "Paper says they's already a five-thousand-dollar reward out."

"Well!"

Mr. Hughes could express a great deal with a simple monosyllable. This time he cared to be noncommittal.

"Mebbe well, mebbe not," said Mr. Schultz, biting the end off a cigar. "Me, I do not choose to pun."

From which it may be inferred that Mr. Schultz was by way of being a humorist.

II

MR. HUGHES was a dreamer. He longed for fame. He yearned to see his name blazoned on the front page:

HUGHES GREETED BY HUGE CROWDS

Or this:

LOVE NEST INVADED BY POLICE—
HUGHES SEIZED!

Or even this:

HUNT FOR DESPERADO ENDS

HUGHES CAPTURED

But Mr. Hughes had another ambi-

tion—he longed for association with greatness. Never did a stranger with any degree of suavity register at the New Mack that Mr. Hughes did not place him, in imagination, as a foreign nobleman traveling incognito, a prominent public character, or, at the very least, a mysterious personage with unplumbed possibilities. The fact that these men usually turned out to be salesmen for the Horn & Bleeker Alfalfa Corporation, or some such prosaic concern, never dimmed Mr. Hughes's high enthusiasm. He was always ready for a fresh crusade into the realm of make-believe.

Mr. Hughes found the story for which he searched. It was easy to find. It was on the front page of the *Centropolis Gazette*, the county's leading newspaper:

KABLE STILL MISSING

Reward Raised to Five Thousand Dollars

WASHINGTON, D. C.—Senator Cyrus W. Kable, wealthy eccentric, has not been heard of since his mysterious disappearance from the grounds of Elmhurst, the estate of his brother, Egbert L. Kable, day before yesterday.

Senator Kable has been out of the active political scene for the past five years. Prior to that time his eccentric behavior, in both private and public life, kept him prominently in the news.

The reporter who had handled the Kable assignment had done a good piece of writing. It was a longish story, but Mr. Hughes read every word of it, including each "it is supposed," "it is thought that perhaps," and "it may be that," his eyes shining with excitement and his right hand affectionately patting the bulldog.

"It appears to me," he finally told Sam Klepp, the elevator boy, "that Senator Kable must have been suffering from a species of recurrent dementia."

"How come?" said Sam. "It doesn't say nothing about him being sick."

"Perhaps not," admitted Mr. Hughes judiciously; "but this isn't a sickness. It's a—a—a disease."

Sam snorted.

"That is to say," added Mr. Hughes defensively, "it isn't exactly what you might call a sickness. The doctors can't do anything for it. It just comes and goes."

"So does the elevator," returned Sam brightly.

But Mr. Hughes was not to be diverted by small shop talk.

"It doesn't stand to reason," he said reflectively, "that a man with enough money to buy anything he wanted would go off that way of his own accord; but neither does it seem as if any one who meant to get money for him would keep so quiet about it. There couldn't have been a kidnaping, anyway. The Senator told his caddie to go on back home—said he was going to run his golf game by himself."

"Listen," said Sam. "Are you *Sherlock Holmes*, or ain't you? The phone is ringing from seventeen."

"Clerk? Yes, sir—at once," Mr. Hughes told No. 17. "Sam, ice water to Mr. Fiddlesinger."

"Fiddlesinger? A new one," remarked Sam. "Never heard of him before."

"Mr. Fiddlesinger is our guest," said Mr. Hughes, reproof in his voice. "It isn't necessary for our guests to post their family histories, Sam."

"Not them!" agreed Sam. "They wouldn't dare be that public about it."

"Funny fellow, Fiddlesinger," went on Mr. Hughes. "Thought at first he might be a salesman, but he's too meek. Asked me if the hotel was fireproof. Imagine that, with the fire station only one block east!"

"I haven't no time to imagine anything," responded Sam. "Carry in haste, spend at leisure—that's my motto."

Mr. Hughes had time to imagine, and did. He imagined himself finding Cyrus W. Kable and claiming the five

thousand dollars reward.

"Say," he told Sam, when that industrious person came back to the desk jiggling a quarter, "I've figured some more about that fellow Kable. I don't know much about golf, but it strikes me as funny when a player sends his caddie home and then he disappears, and so do the green markers on the last five holes, and all the new golf balls in the caddie house."

"You mean you think he took them?"

"I don't know," answered Mr. Hughes sagely. "It looks as if some one did, for certain."

At that moment a personage appeared in the doorway of the New Mack. Even Sam Klepp knew at once that here was a personage. The stranger gave over his big dark brown suitcase without removing his big dark brown cigar from his mouth.

Mr. Hughes adjusted his eyeglasses, smoothed a few refractory hairs with a single desultory motion, and gently patted the black and white bulldog. Then he set his thumbs on the edge of the desk and his fingers behind it, and stood in readiness. Coming toward him he saw a large, well built man, possibly a banker or a director of sorts. The arriving guest walked in a direct line, as a man should walk who is habitually going to important places and attending to important things.

Even so, Mr. Hughes had time to observe the stranger's attire. He saw gray knickers, he saw black and white sport shoes; but these were only incidentals. Between the knickers and the sport shoes were a pair of the most striking stockings upon which his eyes had ever gazed. Green and white they were, and their pattern seemed most unusual.

As the newcomer approached, Mr. Hughes's glance traveled upward. It passed over a gray vest, noted a chain of large new-fashioned links—Mr. Hughes read his advertisements—and ascended finally to what might be

termed the throat zone, where it was arrested by the emblem in the stranger's coat lapel. Mr. Hughes saw this curious ornament at once, and even as his glance continued to record the man's rather distinguished-looking grayish brown side whiskers, brown eyes with unusually bushy brows, and firm mouth and chin, his gaze focused upon the significant little device.

It was a gold golf-bag-and-clubs arrangement. That much Mr. Hughes made certain as the stranger reached the desk. More Mr. Hughes would not have been able to tell you, because his knowledge of the ancient Scottish rite had been gleaned from pictures of the champions of the links as offered by those connoisseurs of art, our sports editors; but he was quite certain that it represented a golf bag and clubs. He so far forgot himself as to give it his undivided attention for the fraction of a minute.

"Hello, my friend!" boomed a voice, and Mr. Hughes looked up—a little ashamed, if the truth were known, because he always made it a point to greet each new guest with a prompt and cheerful welcome—into the full ivory effect of a smile.

"How do you do, sir?" said Mr. Hughes. "Just in from the East? Something with bath?"

"You can wager your cousin Thomas's tomcat I want something with bath, be it only soap and towels," replied the stranger.

Mr. Hughes, according to the later testimony of the elevator boy, was visibly taken aback. Here was a personage, and evidently an eccentric one.

"Of course, sir," said Mr. Hughes, pressing a little button somewhere inside himself and turning on just the proper amount of smile. "You will find everything quite nice, I am sure."

He smoothed his hair and handed the stranger a pen, pushing the register forward.

"I notice you seem inclined to favor my golf assortment, friend," charged

the stranger, registering with swift efficiency. "There, now, pray don't apologize. Well, there's gold in them mountings."

"What? Oh!" remarked Mr. Hughes, just like that.

"True, friend, true," rejoined the new guest, returning the pen. "Gold in the mountings and gold in my links, and there's no accounting for tastes, so methinks—perhaps this is a pretty poor poem, but say, just as one golf bug to another, how do you like my stockings? Pretty nifty, eh?"

Mr. Hughes looked at the stockings for the second time. Any one would have looked at them at least twice. Their pattern was certainly peculiar. All over their tubular surface were replicas of a patient golfer, white, poised over a ball, white and green, on a background, green. Around their upper margin crossed golf clubs made a striking frieze.

"Yes," ventured Mr. Hughes, "I guess you would call them—well, of course you would. I'm afraid I'm not much of a golfer," he added, rather apologetically. "And now, Sam, let the gentleman give you his grip."

"But suppose we don't belong to the same lodge?" queried the stranger.

"I beg your pardon?" questioned Mr. Hughes in bewilderment.

"Nothing serious," said the stranger. "Is this room, to which you have so graciously assigned me, a corner room? Have I any mail? A package, perchance?"

"It is, Mr. Wire. There is no mail," replied Mr. Hughes, having looked at the register, his eyes like two fried eggs.

"Say no more, friend," said Mr. Wire. "Look you! The House—capital 'H,' please!—would cut me off if I failed to give you some small token of the esteem in which we cherish you. Behold!"

Saying which, Mr. Wire tossed into the air a little white ball, another little white ball, and yet another little white

ball. For a moment he juggled them expertly. They all came to rest in the hollow of his hand, and he gave one to Mr. Hughes, who was too much surprised to protest, one to Sam Klepp, who had dropped the big brown suitcase, and one to the dining room servant.

"The little child sang as follows," he informed them in a singsong: "Save it un-til nee-ded—a great game, golf, a fine game, a man's game, but also a woman's game!—but in my enthusiasm I forget my point—save it un-til nee-ded. Then give it to your sweet-heart, your moth-er, your sis-ter or a-nother, and you'll nev-er be lone-some a-lone! And now to my castle, as it were—for every man's home is his castle, and every man's golf makes him king!"

Mr. Wire smiled a thirty-two-ivory smile and nodded affably to his audience. He walked into the elevator, followed somewhat gingerly by Sam Klepp with the big brown suitcase. The door clanged to, the cage ascended, and still Mr. Hughes stood speechless.

III

If Mr. Hughes's mind was somewhat upset by Mr. Wire's strange behavior on Friday evening, its condition on Saturday morning was little short of chaotic.

About ten o'clock Sam Klepp approached with a look of bewilderment on the plain stolidity of his face.

"Guess what that big bird wants now," he demanded rhetorically.

Mr. Hughes knew full well who the big bird was, but he remembered that he represented the New Mack.

"You mean Mr. Wire?" he inquired, not quite concealing the excitement aroused in his breast by the thought of the strange guest's possible action.

"Yeah!" grunted Sam laconically. "Him!"

Mr. Hughes proceeded to guess, al-

though silently.

"He did this," informed Sam.

"That big clown," Sam went on, "wanted me to go to every store in town and buy him golf stockings. Gave me a twenty, and told me to get five or six pairs of sporty-looking ones, not too expensive, and keep the change."

"Did you find any?"

"Did I find any? Say, when that fellow wears the stockings I bought for him, you can hear him coming around the block without no announcements whatever, he'll be so loud!"

"How about those he had on last night?" asked Mr. Hughes.

"I guess he wins at that," admitted the purchasing agent. "I never saw golf stockings like those before. They weren't stockings, anyway. They were funny papers."

"Maybe so," said Mr. Hughes. "Every man to his taste. There comes a customer for you."

Sam departed to run his cage to the top of its shaft, which was synonymous with the third floor, and Mr. Hughes began to concentrate.

A suspicion was dawning in his mind. Out of the hazy nebulousity of his thoughts concerning Mr. Wire he was gradually arranging a series of connected facts.

Mr. Wire was a very peculiar golfer. He spoke of his "House" with a capital "H." He distributed golf balls with rime, but with no apparent reason. He sent a bell boy out after six pairs of golf hose, to be purchased at as many different stores as possible. He wore a gold pin of unusual design, symbolic of his passion for golf. He spoke in fanciful and at times incomprehensible language about his monomania. In short, the man was crazy.

The idea which had been incubating in a lower nest of Mr. Hughes's brain suddenly broke through its shell and became actively alive. He could see the words of his idea as clearly as he saw, through the window, the letters of the New Mack sign:

"Mr. Wire is Senator Kable!"

Mr. Wire was not Mr. Wire at all, but the missing Senator. There was no doubt of it. Even the name revealed it, for is not "wire" a synonym for "cable"?

With this astonishing conjecture Mr. Hughes was not, at first, prepared to cope. He erased it at once, and began, in a sort of daze, to smooth his hair and pat his bulldog; but the idea returned, and persisted as if flashed on by electric bulbs:

"Mr. Wire is Senator Kable!"

Presently Mr. Hughes's surmises galvanized into action. Here was opportunity, and he was not going to miss it. He hurried across the lobby toward the private telephone booth, and, as he rounded the corner of the steps, he all but stumbled over a long burlap-wrapped package that looked, from its shape, as if it might contain a bundle of fishing rods. It bulked slightly at the end nearest Mr. Hughes, and he stooped to read the prominent tag, in Sam's large scrawl. Sam believed in system.

"Room 16," read Mr. Hughes.

Glancing around furtively in the best detective story manner, and finding himself alone in the lobby, he pulled loose one end of the burlap wrapping. Within he saw white bamboo poles with rounded red ends. Mr. Hughes knew little about golf, but he had noticed those tall bamboo poles, seemingly always planted very fortunately just where the grass was smoothest on the course of the country club near Shirleyville.

Mr. Hughes recognized coincidence when he met it. Here was a package of green markers for Mr. Wire. Here was final proof of the mysterious guest's identity!

It didn't take Mr. Hughes long to convince Murphy, enterprising city editor of the *Centropolis Gazette*, that a man should be sent to Shirleyville, to the New Mack, on confidential business in connection with the Kable case.

And so it was that Mr. Hughes presently came around the corner from the telephone booth, his forehead beaded anew with perspiration, his hand on his hair, trying his best to look as he felt, which was precisely the way he knew a Scotland Yard operative would feel under similar circumstances.

How he managed to keep his secret safe even from the inquisitive nature of Sam Klepp throughout the slowly creeping hours of Saturday morning would in itself make an admirable story of mystery. However, things seemed to move along much the same as usual, with occasional requests from the guests for telephone connections, together with one call from Mr. Fiddlesinger, of the big name and the little personality, for important mail which had never arrived in spite of his timid insistence that it was overdue.

For one thing Mr. Hughes was devoutly thankful—Mr. Wire remained in his room, although the day was Saturday, thus keeping Mr. Hughes from having to solve the problem of what he would do if the interesting guest were suddenly to decide to check out.

At one o'clock Mr. Hughes held consultation with Sam Klepp.

"Sam," he said, "you look after things at the desk. I may be away until two thirty."

To Sam the chance to take over the responsibilities of a full-fledged desk clerk was nothing, one way or the other. It struck him as strange, however, that Mr. Hughes, who was usually back before his hour was up, should decide to take overtime on Saturday. However, it was quite true that the next train was not due until three o'clock, and, to the New Mack, except for train time, Saturday was just another day of the week.

Mr. Hughes stopped at the drug store soda fountain to revive his nerves with a cooling drink. The responsibility of his position was making him slightly shaky, and whenever he

thought of the five thousand dollars—which he frequently did, five thousand dollars being more than he earned in two years at the New Mack—his forehead became noticeably damp.

Later he intended to partake of food for the inner man at his favorite restaurant, after which he planned to visit one of his old friends, a clothing merchant. There he would make inquiries about golf and golf clothes and such things. It might be well to exhibit familiarity with the nomenclature of the game, especially if he was going to be interviewed for the papers.

And there was another thing to settle in his mind.

"I have always trained myself to observe and deduce," he would begin, with quiet dignity.

IV

MR. HUGHES, having attended to hunger, found that he had managed to use most of the time remaining before the arrival of the three o'clock train. He had forty minutes in which to visit his friend Wetzel, the family outfitter, and return to the New Mack to await the arrival of the *Gazette* reporter.

He priced golf stockings, and looked at some selected by Mr. Wetzel himself.

"Thinking about taking up the game?" inquired the merchant.

"Perhaps," agreed Mr. Hughes, who had never thought of it until that very minute. After all, with five thousand dollars—

"I wouldn't tell everybody, because we naturally want to sell this stock," went on Mr. Wetzel; "but we expect to put in a new line pretty soon. Perhaps you would like to wait. The latest things—novelty golf stockings—sporty."

"Perhaps," Mr. Hughes told him again, anxious to get away. Then, to shift the conversation, and broaching the thing which was uppermost in his own mind: "Do you happen to know a Mr. Wire?"

"Well, if that isn't funny!" said Mr. Wetzel, in genuine surprise. "These new stockings I was speaking about—I have a card here. Wait a minute—I'll show you."

From the ledge behind the counter he picked up a card, which he handed over to his customer. It was the usual announcement of a wholesale commercial house.

"Introducing a new sure-fire fast-selling line," Mr. Hughes read, "the Nif-Tee Golf Hosiery." There was more descriptive matter, and then, at the bottom, the salesman's name being filled in with a pen: "Our Mr. Wire will call on you on or about—"

Mr. Hughes didn't even read the date line.

"Mr. Wire!" he gasped, in his excitement almost kicking through a case into a rainbow assortment of ties. "Not Mr. Wire?"

"Mr. Wire," affirmed Mr. Wetzel, eying him strangely. "Why, what's the matter?"

Mr. Hughes gulped. He wanted to run out of the store and back to the New Mack in time to save himself from what any one could see would be an extremely embarrassing situation. He would have liked to be able to change into a horse, so that he might gallop through the aisles of Wetzel, the family outfitter.

His natural dignity made a heroic effort to assert itself. He coughed. His Adam's apple, usually politely reticent, suddenly made a lumpy appearance above his collar. He smoothed his hair and patted his bulldog, and with the motion his dignity won out. Mr. Hughes was nearly himself again.

"Nothing," he said, rather lamely, but almost calmly. "Just a fellow I happen to have met."

"Well," said Mr. Wetzel, no longer interested, "you wait until you see those new Nif-Tee golf hose before you buy."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Hughes fervently, "I will. I will. Yes, I will

indeed. Well, I must go. Lunch hour all over."

And he left the good Mr. Wetzel, thoroughly surprised at such an abrupt termination to what had been a wandering neighborly conversation, standing alone in the middle aisle of his store.

Mr. Hughes hurried, in order to find the strange guest and ask one direct question before the arrival of the *Gazette* reporter and disaster.

"Do you sell Nif-Tee Golf Hosiery?" he would say, and if the guest said "Yes," there would still be time to make certain and to head off the newspaper man in one way or another without shame to himself.

If he failed—even now he could see the headlines change before his eyes from what he had visualized:

KABLE FOUND BY THOMAS Z. HUGHES

Instead, he saw one of those facetious yarns, the joy of the clever reporter, headed:

HOTEL CLERK FOOLED BY HOSIERY SALESMAN

They might even find out about his middle name and use the "Zephaniah." It was terrible!

Mr. Hughes was too worried to be surprised when he noticed that Sam was not behind the desk. The lobby was deserted, and he walked around the desk to take his regular place, meaning to telephone Mr. Wire and learn the truth.

As he reached the switchboard, he heard a stentorian roar from the little inner office. He flinched visibly and jumped behind the door. He recognized the capable voice of Mr. Wire.

"Told you I was a Senator, did he?" bellowed Mr. Wire. "Why, the old lunkhead! The big hunk of cheese! I'm the best salesman the Nif-Tee Hosiery Company ever had, if I do say it myself, and if the boys in the home office knew about this I'd be 'Senator'

the rest of my natural life. Huh!" Mr. Wire seemed to be cooling. "Mc a Senator!" He sounded as if his famous smile might be working again. "Say, I'm no more a Senator than that elevator boy!"

"The evidence is conclusive," admitted another voice—a voice strange to the listening man behind the door. "However, I think you have made it quite clear that there has been a regrettable error. That's what the old man got me into by listening to a fool hotel clerk."

"Well," said Sam Klepp—and Mr. Hughes could have strangled him as he spoke—"Mr. Hughes told me all along you acted sort of suspicious like, and you *did* send me after those golf stockings, you know."

Mr. Wire laughed.

"That and the golf ball stunt seem to have done the trick," he said. "Look, let me show you something."

Mr. Hughes peeped through the crack behind the half open door. He saw Mr. Wire place a hand in his coat pocket. Into the air the salesman threw a little white ball, another little white ball, and still another little white ball. Expertly he juggled the three spheres for a moment. They came to rest in the hollow of his hand. With a courtly bow, he gave one to the stranger and one to Sam Klepp. The third ball he retained.

Mr. Hughes looked on in wonder. What was the idea of this trick again?

"Clever thing, this," stated Mr. Wire.

"I can do that myself," demurred the reporter.

"Not the trick—the ball," explained Mr. Wire. "Watch!" With a flip of his thumb he turned back the upper half of his golf ball, to reveal what looked to Mr. Hughes like a small mirror. "Pocket compact case, complete," he said. "The ladies like them. Rouge—mirror—it isn't a real golf ball at all."

"I'm afraid I don't quite get it,"

said the *Gazette* man. "What's the big idea?"

"Just a gift from the firm—the House with a capital 'H,'" chuckled Mr. Wire. "Novelty advertising stunt for Nif-Tee Golf Hosiery."

"Well, well!" admired the *Gazette* man. "Clever thing, all right! And on the strength of that, that sap hotel clerk had me sent up here. Can you beat it?"

"Have a cigar and forget it," advised the salesman. "I'm the man with the big peeve. Marked down for a suspicious character! Wait until I see him!"

"I'll get a story, anyway," laughed the newspaper man, as they prepared to leave the inner office.

V

MR. HUGHES didn't hesitate. His course of action was clear. He must get away from there. He had some heavy thinking to do if he was to save his face. Those sarcastic headlines were looming dangerously near!

As he turned the corner near the telephone booth, a man of fairly large body but very meek voice barred his passage and demanded timidly:

"Really, hasn't my mail come yet? It must have been sent, you know—in fact, I attended to that myself."

"No, no, and again no!" replied Mr. Hughes fiercely, stirred completely out of his calm, but making a mighty effort to control his nerves.

"But it must be here. I mailed it myself. A package," persisted Mr. Fiddlesinger, blushing at his own temerity.

Mr. Hughes came near to resorting to physical violence for the first time in his life.

"Listen!" he said, striving for patience. "I have no time to fool with you or your packages. I do not mean to be discourteous. The New Mack strives to please its guests. However, I am bent on serious business, and—"

"What time is that fellow due back

here?" demanded a belligerent voice around the corner. "I'd like to see him right away."

Mr. Hughes jumped, literally and thoroughly. In fact, he jumped so effectively that he bumped his shins on the bundle of bamboo rods, which lay against the wall.

"Darn!" he muttered, descending as near to profanity as he ever allowed himself to stoop.

"I'm sorry," said a plaintive voice. "You stumbled over—why, bless my soul, here they are!"

Mr. Hughes grasped his pet corn with his right hand, leaned against the wall with his left, muttered maledictions against people who wanted packages in general and Mr. Fiddlesinger in particular, and thought about his own peculiar predicament. At first he did not perceive the tremendous import of the timid guest's mild statement.

"I say here is my package," repeated Mr. Fiddlesinger happily. "I knew it must be here somewhere!"

"No," said Mr. Hughes, striving to smooth his hair and adjust his eyeglasses, in a vain effort to recapture his dignity and recover his poise. "Those go to Mr. Wire, in Room 16."

"The tag does read 'Room 16,'" admitted Mr. Fiddlesinger, "but I am quite sure they are mine. Look!" he cried exultantly. "Here is the address tag—'Mr. C. W. Fiddlesinger, New Mack Hotel, Shirleyville.'"

Mr. Hughes looked. He saw the address, and he saw something more. Over the stamps was a blurred postmark—"Washington, D. C."

It was at this precise point that Mr. Hughes was the recipient of one of those rare flashes of thought, coming seemingly out of the very ether itself, which distinguish a man of genius from ordinary mortals such as you and I. Instantly he realized that Sam Klepp must have put the wrong number on the tag. Sam's "system" sometimes failed to function.

He shot an arrow into the air.

"Listen, Senator Kable," he said. "You must take those green markers back to Elmhurst."

The effect of this simple remark was no less than electrical. Mr. Fiddlesinger straightened up with a blank expression in his eyes. This was succeeded by a look of fear and a wild-eyed glare of disappointment and rage.

"You can't do it!" he screamed. "You can't do it! All my pretty green markers—I want to make a golf course—you can't have them!"

Around the corner rushed Mr. Fiddlesinger, followed by Mr. Hughes, and straight into the amazed persons of the *Gazette* man and Wire rushed the wailing man.

"Don't let him take them away from me!" he implored them. "I never did have a golf course I liked. Why do you suppose I shipped them here? Why do you think I brought all my golf balls and clubs?"

As far as Mr. Hughes was concerned, the question was a stickler. For once he was speechless, but his companion, being a trained reporter, took in the situation with more ease. Together, he and Mr. Hughes led the quivering and acquiescent Senator to a chair.

"I'm Selvage, of the Centropolis *Gazette*," said the stranger hurriedly. "Take it you must be Mr. Hughes. I drove over at once."

They tried to quiet the Senator.

"My golf course!" he kept protesting. "I never *did* like that Elmhurst course, and I was going to buy up land here and make a good one. Here and everywhere," he added vaguely.

"Clear off his nut he is," burst out Sam, who had been taking in everything, eyes wide and mouth open.

"They won't let me do it!" wailed Senator Kable feebly. "All my green markers and all my golf balls, and now these people—look at them!"

Mr. Hughes looked at them. His glance was quietly triumphant.

"I hadn't expected you until three

o'clock," he told Mr. Selvage, after that gentleman had again explained his presence.

"We must wire his brother at once," said Mr. Selvage later, having taken command of the situation, "and then I must call my paper. Identification is clear. We have the letters and the luggage. Just crazy enough to be foolish—not at all dangerous."

"You stay there in the chair and be comfortable, Senator," said Mr. Hughes. "Maybe your brother will help you with the golf course," he added diplomatically.

"Perhaps so," acquiesced Cyrus W. Kable pathetically. "Thank you, sir, for your courtesy."

"Quite a clever coup you made, Hughes," volunteered Mr. Selvage. "As I told you, this boy certainly had us all fooled!"

"Had me masquerading as a statesman," put in Mr. Wire, lighting one of his inexhaustible supply of big brown cigars.

"Sam always was inclined to jump at conclusions," said Mr. Hughes, a trifle loftily. "I fear you gentlemen were caused some little embarrassment. Fortunately for me, I missed it all."

"Well, I'm not denying that I was loaded for bear when I came out of the office," admitted Mr. Wire meditatively.

Sam Klepp sank lower in his chair over behind the desk, where he was making himself as inconspicuous as possible.

"A clean scoop for the *Gazette*," went on Mr. Selvage. "What a story! And now, Mr. Hughes, you will claim the reward, of course. Tell me all about yourself. We'll want a long story on that."

Mr. Hughes visualized a two-column streamer in the morning *Gazette*.

"It will be a sincere pleasure to be of assistance to you," he said.

Turning, Mr. Hughes surveyed himself in the mirror that hung behind the cashier's desk. He smoothed his hair lightly with a well kept hand, adjusted his eyeglasses, straightened the black silk ribbon, and gave his bulldog a final affectionate pat on the head.

He smiled at Mr. Selvage, who waited patiently, pencil and pad in hand.

"I have always trained myself to observe and deduce," began Mr. Hughes with quiet dignity.

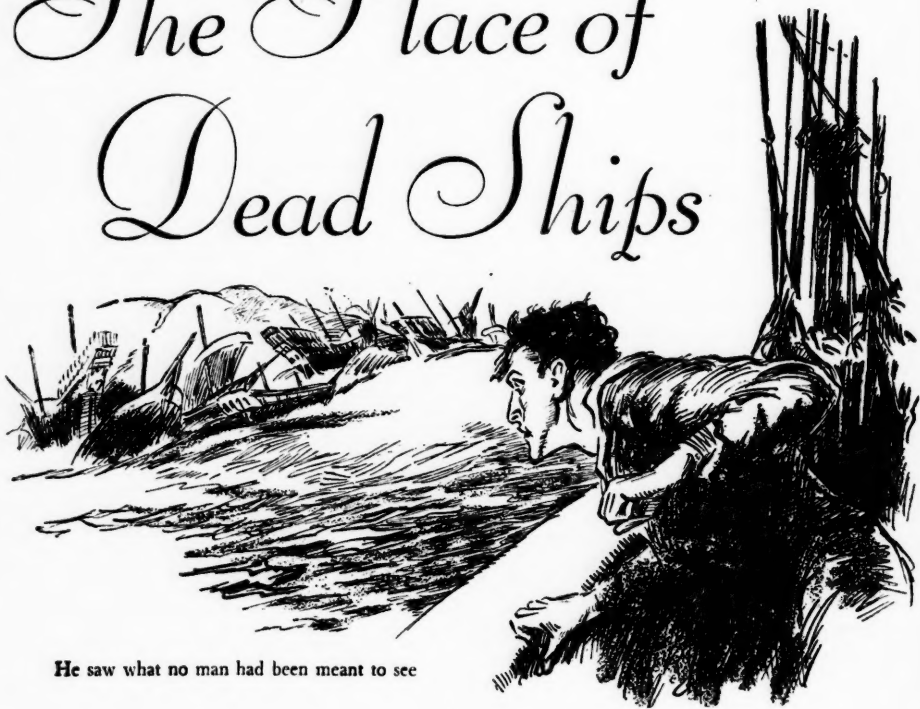


I MET A LADY IN THE MEADS

THAT hour I met you on the summer road
 My heart prepared for winter, for I knew
 There would be swift sweet loving 'twixt us two,
 But the swift ending also I forebode;
 For yours the face that hath no promise of peace,
 Nor faith that lasts, nor kindness, only bloom
 And flame, and honey on the tongue—then doom.
 But when to a lover hath love brought him ease?
 And why upon an earth where nothing stays,
 But all bright things speed fast to long eclipse,
 Making some brief and summery delays,
 Should love have longer lease, or lips on lips
 Cling longer than the blossom on the bough?
 So I complain not that 'tis winter now.

Richard Le Gallienne

The Place of Dead Ships



He saw what no man had been meant to see

*The sea is strange, and surely a stranger story than
this one has seldom come out of it*

By R. W. Alexander



IN the great storm of that year the Southern Maid went down with all hands. She was due and overdue at Suva. A month went by, and another, and with each passing day the light went from John Holden's life; for the missing schooner had carried the girl who was promised as his wife.

He cursed the sea, and the blue waves laughed at him and mocked him with their voice. Their soft plash on the beach was to him a never ending torment. He left the house he had

built on the hill above the bay—left it for the strange places of the world.

He crossed deserts and dark, barren lands; yet the voice of the sea came to him over mountain and river and a thousand miles of sand. It came to him beneath the midday sun and in the quiet watches of the night. It came to him though he pressed his hands against his ears, though he mouthed curses and prayers and called upon God to end his torture; so he returned to the sea, for it called him with a voice as insistent as the voice of Death.

John had fallen in the world, and in

his own estimation; but he had nothing to live for, and he did not care. Fore-castles knew him, and the plague spots of old ports. He had no shame, because he had no pride. Hags took what little money he had left when he had paid for rum; but the sea now mocked him no more, and he had peace of a sort.

It was in the fore-castle of a whaler that he met Old Danny.

"Danny's crazy," one of the sailors told him.

The old man cackled, and sang an obscene song, pounding the table with a gnarled fist. Seventy years old or more, his gray beard stained about his mouth, his eyes rheumy and shot with blood, he seemed only half human as he slobbered out the filthy words. Holden listened with impassive face. He could easily believe that Old Danny was mad.

The whaler went south into cold gray seas. Whales were scarce, the luck poor. Holden spent most of his time in the fore-castle, listening to Old Danny. The graybeard's gabble held for him some inexplicable fascination—the fascination of the utterly repulsive.

"A mother an' her baby," Old Danny said. "So white an' still ye'd think they was asleep; an' seaweed over them like a veil. Oh, aye—the sea's strange, the sea's strange!"

"An' the dead men, Danny," suggested one of the crew. "Don't forget the dead men."

The old man drooled into his beard.

"Waren't so many dead men, neither—the fishes seed to that. There was a shark in one o' the cabins, an' a devilfish in another. The shark was dead, but the devilfish was alive an' playin' with a skull." He peered about the circle of his listeners. "Don't ye believe me?"

"Course we believe you, Danny," a man replied hastily.

"The sea was gray, an' the sky was gray, an' the hills was black. There weren't no sun nor no stars, an' the

moon didn't shine, an' the wind didn't blow. Oh, aye—the sea's strange, the sea's strange! An' the woman an' her baby, so white an' still ye'd think they was asleep! Lord, but I seen queer sights! An' the dead ships everywhere, with nary a bird to perch in the riggin', an' nary a wave to wash their sides!"

Holden leaned forward.

"Where was this, Danny?"

The old man glowered at him. "An' the silence, with nothin' movin'! Where was it, ye say? Where the dead ships go, mister—where the dead ships go."

"Danny was picked up in a boat, years ago," one of the men told Holden later. "He had no food or water, an' was ravin' mad. He's been that way ever since."

"There's nothing in this story of his about the dead ships?" Holden said.

"Nary a thing. How could there be?"

"The sea's strange," Holden said; and the other laughed.

II

THE whaler went south, into the great spaces of the sea, where there was no land within a thousand miles.

"We better head north," Old Danny said darkly. "We better head north."

"Why, Danny?" a sailor asked.

"We're gettin' near the place."

"Aw, forget the place!" the other man snarled. "We hear nothin' but that whine o' yours, day in, day out."

"Ye'll be there some day," Old Danny persisted. "The fish 'll swim in an' out between your bones, an' the little crabs 'll live in your skull."

"Hush up, Danny," said the boat-swain.

"An' the ship 'll lie there in the mud, an'—"

"Hush up, I tell ye!"

"Ye don't believe me, none o' ye!" said Old Danny. "Ye think I'm a liar. I took the boat from a brig, as neat a craft as ever I seen, an' filled her

lockers with canned stuff. The wind didn't blow, an' I had to pull all the way. Three weeks I pulled afore the grub gave out, an' then"—he scratched his head—"an' then—"

"An' then you was picked up, Danny."

"Aye, then I was picked up." He glared around. "Ye don't believe me! Get into a boat, any o' ye, an' I'll bring ye to the place." He laughed at their silence—a shrill cackle of mirth. "I don't hear ye all shoutin' now!"

A few nights later Holden found Old Danny on deck.

"Did you mean what you said about taking any of us to this place, Danny?"

The old man squinted up at him.

"Aye, I did. Will ye come?"

"Yes," replied Holden. "If you really think all the ships that go down in these seas are washed up there, I'll come."

"What for do you want to go there?"

"You remember the Southern Maid?" Holden said. "She went down two years ago. I want to see her again."

"Ye're mad," Old Danny told him; "but I'm mad myself, so I'll bring ye. When 'll we go?"

"As soon as we can. We'll take the boat astern. I'll take a trick at the wheel to-morrow night, and we'll slip over."

It was easy—easier, even, than Holden had expected. The night was dark, the wind light, the sea calm. Old Danny hauled the boat in under the schooner's stern, made the rope secure, and slid down into her. Holden passed some line about the ship's wheel and followed the old man. As he slashed with his knife at the rope it seemed to him that he severed his last connection with sanity. The schooner drifted on.

When the darkness had swallowed her, but for her lights, they put out the oars and began to row. All night

they rowed, while Danny sang his song and Holden watched for the gray light of dawn, wondering if the schooner would be out of sight.

The sun came up on an empty sea. As a little wind was blowing, they unshipped the oars and hoisted the sail. Old Danny took the tiller and headed the boat south.

"Maybe we'll get there," he said, and grinned.

"Don't you know where it is?"

The tousled head was shaken emphatically.

"Pass up a chew o' 'baccy," the old man said.

Holden complied.

"Have you no idea of our course?"

"Maybe I have," Danny said, sullen now; "an' maybe ye was a fool to believe me."

Holden said nothing. Life was not so precious to him that he feared its loss overmuch.

"We'll be all right when we runs into the current," Old Danny said. "It should be around here somewheres. Then we won't have to worry none."

The day wore on. Holden watched the sea and the sky, and thought of the girl who had gone down with the Southern Maid. He had seen her lately in his sleep, and she had smiled and beckoned. He would be glad to see her again.

"I'm mad!" he said aloud; and Old Danny grinned.

"There ain't no difference between bein' mad an' bein' otherwise. Folks thinks there is, but there ain't—except that when ye're mad ye're happy, an' when ye're otherwise ye ain't."

The wind continued light, and the boat moved little. Holden drowsed. He awoke to find night come, and Old Danny asleep in the stern, curled up, twitching and grunting like a dog with a bad dream. Well, it didn't matter. Nothing mattered now. As well for the boat to be overwhelmed in a sudden squall as for them to drift on,

week after week, until hunger and thirst brought things to an end.

Thirst came upon them through Old Danny leaving the bung loose in the water cask while Holden slept. The water dripped out and washed about the bottom of the boat; and when Holden awoke the cask was almost empty.

He said nothing to the old man. They had been three weeks in the boat now, and a silence seldom broken had fallen between them.

What remained of the water lasted four days. In the heat of the next day Old Danny dipped his hands in the brine overboard and drank. Holden watched indifferently.

That night, tormented by thirst, Old Danny jumped overboard with a shrill cry. Holden came to his feet in the rocking boat and peered down at the dark water. Ripples spread about the boat, bubbles floated by—that was all.

Dawn came, and across the gunwale Holden peered at an empty sea. The wind had freshened, and was whipping the waves to white.

The day was long, though there were times when he knew nothing. Night found him very weak; the dawn that followed found him weaker still.

This day it was that he saw the Southern Maid come down on him under full sail, a cream of foam about her bow. He struggled to his knees, steadied himself by gripping the gunwale, and stared at her with bright eyes. Faces lined her rails; men were in the shrouds. He heard their shouting.

Then she was gone, and he saw only the gray seas tipped with white, and the sullen sky. The grip of his fingers loosened. He slipped into the bottom of the boat and lay there, huddled against a seat.

Later he spoke aloud, but without knowing what he said. Then darkness hid the sea, and his babbling gave place to fitful slumber, broken by strange dreams.

He was unconscious as the brig came down upon the boat, and the creaking of her cordage failed to rouse him; but when strong hands lifted him he opened his eyes and gazed uncomprehendingly into the bearded face so close to his.

"The boat's worth pickin' up," said a voice; "but he ain't."

There was a bellow of laughter.

"Heave him to the sharks," said another voice.

"The place of ships," Holden whispered, and grinned with lips that cracked.

"What's that?" said the first voice—a great, rough voice, well suited to the bearded face.

Holden only laughed.

"Give him water," said another voice.

They gave him water, sparingly, and a little of his strength came back to him.

"What's that you said about ships?" asked the bearded man.

"Ships?" Holden said. "Dead ships—and a mother and her baby, so still and white you'd think they were asleep. Old Danny saw them."

"He's ravin'! Bring him aboard an' sling the boat on deck."

III

So Holden came aboard the Golden Lily, a whaling brig most inaptly named. From bowsprit to stern she reeked of blood, burned blubber, and other unclean things. Her decks were greasy with oil, her very rigging foul with smoke. She stained the sea about her as she wallowed south in search of prey, and left a greasy trail to mark her passing.

A day and another slipped by, and Holden looked about him with returning strength. He saw much to make him wonder, much to make him wary. From skipper to cook, each man of the crew seemed to be a villain born and bred. Ostensibly and just now actually a whaler, he suspected that

the Golden Lily had at other times engaged in more questionable enterprises.

The bearded mate said as much to him, bluntly, the first day he came on deck.

"Keep your eyes open as much as you like; but keep your mouth shut. We don't want no preachers aboard this hooker, see?"

Holden nodded indifferently.

"I'm no preacher."

"We're keepin' that boat, to pay us for the trouble of pickin' you up," the mate informed him.

"You're welcome to it."

The mate became inquisitive.

"Your ship went down, eh?"

Holden was surprised. Somehow, it had not occurred to him that an explanation was necessary.

"No," he said. "We left her, Old Danny and I. Then we went short of water, and he jumped overboard."

"Why did you leave her?"

Again Holden was surprised.

"To look for the place of dead ships, of course. I thought you knew."

The mate gave him a strange glance.

"Of course, of course," he nodded. "I forgot. That was where you was bound for, eh? The place of dead ships!" He rubbed his nose. "Never heard o' that place afore."

"It's where the ships that sink in these waters go," Holden said; "and maybe the ships that sink all over the world—I don't know. Old Danny said that all the ships ever built were there; but Old Danny was mad."

"Guess he was," agreed the mate. "Guess he was mad, all right!"

"You don't believe there's such a place?"

"There's nothin' I wouldn't believe about the sea."

"The sea's strange, the sea's strange!" Holden said, and smiled to himself.

"These ships are under water, eh?" the mate inquired.

"By the way he spoke, no. He said

they were in a sort of river, between black hills—an estuary, I think he meant."

"Then we could get things out of them—any stores they had?"

"Yes. Old Danny got canned food from one of them, so they must be high and dry."

"And there's old ships there? Ships, maybe, that went down a hundred years ago?"

"Yes."

"If we could find that place, we'd be rich," the mate said then.

"You'd loot the ships?" asked Holden. "You'd take the stuff they had?"

"Sure I would! It belongs to whoever finds it."

"It belongs to the sea."

"Ye're crazy, man!" the mate snarled, and walked away.

Later the skipper came to Holden. He was a short, fat man with the eyes of a pig and a loose mouth that smiled easily.

"Mate's been tellin' me about this place where the ships come up," he began. "Any truth in it?"

"I don't know," replied Holden.

"If there is, there's a fortune there for the man who finds it."

"I don't believe that," said Holden.

"The sea has taken these ships, and what the sea takes it keeps."

"Why did you want to go there, then?"

"To see a ship that went down two years ago," Holden said shortly.

"You've no idea where the place is?"

"None."

The skipper left him with a sly grin.

The Golden Lily changed her course in the face of barren waters, and went east until the wind failed her and she wallowed in an oily sea. It was a sea of gray, with unguessed depths beneath a placid surface—a threatening sea, Holden thought, staring down at it over the rails of the brig. The water was dark and opaque, though the sun shone mistily. A day before, sharks

had followed the brig, but not now. Holden thought that strange.

Day after day the calm held. Day by day the mist grew thicker until it hid the face of the sun, though lower down the air was clear. That reminded Holden of something. With a remarkable vividness Old Danny's words came back to him:

"There warn't no sun nor no stars, an' the moon didn't shine, an' the wind didn't blow."

There was no sun now, Holden thought. When night came, neither moon nor stars shone, and the wind didn't blow. Old Danny had spoken of a current.

Holden approached the mate.

"Are we drifting at all?"

"Driftin' south," the mate said shortly.

"Fast?"

"No."

Holden laughed.

"What the hell's the joke?"

"We're drifting to the place of dead ships," declared Holden. "The sea's gray, and the sky's gray, and there's no wind. We'll go there, but we'll never come back. We'll join the dead ships and the dead men!"

The mate gripped him by the arm and shook him fiercely.

"Stow that! Don't let the men hear you, or there'll be hell to pay!"

"You're afraid?" Holden said, surprised. "Why? There's nothing to fear." He twisted loose from the man's hand. "You wanted to go there, didn't you?"

The mate strode off, muttering.

IV

DAY merged into day with slow monotony. The sun had hidden its face; sea and sky were gray. No ripple stirred the surface of the deep. Opaque and dark and utterly forbidding it lay beneath the changeless sky. No wind came to move the heavy air, to lift for one short moment the reek of the brig.

So the days changed to weeks while

the Golden Lily drifted slowly on. The crew muttered uneasily of taking to the boats, but always lacked the courage.

One night there came a startled cry from the watch, and Holden went on deck. He saw a dark ship drifting by, without lights, a black mass in the shadows. There were no stars, nor any gleam of a moon, and the water looked like pitch. The dark ship drifted slowly by, in deathly silence, to vanish astern.

"Ahoy!" The mate cupped his hands about his mouth. "Ship *ahoy*!"

No answer came; but the echo of his voice whispered back to them from some far distant point:

"*Ahoy!*"

"Strange!" said the mate, fear in his voice.

"What's strange?" Holden inquired.

The mate turned on him, snarling.

"It's darned strange for her to be driftin' stern first, with no lights up—that's all. What the hell did you think I meant?"

"I thought you meant it was strange that nobody should answer you," Holden said. "It's not strange at all, because her crew are dead, and the dead don't answer us when we call. She's not drifting, but we are."

"How do you mean, she's not drifting?"

"She's aground," said Holden.

"We've come to the place of dead ships—didn't you know that?"

"You're crazy!"

The voice of the man in the bow floated back to them:

"Ship ahead!"

The skipper had come on deck.

"Get the line out, and see what water we have. Lively now!"

The splash of the lead sounded hollow, empty.

"Six and a half by the line, sir. Six by the line!"

"Better anchor until morning," the skipper said. "No use running risks. Lord, this is a queer place!"

The brig swung gently at the chain, the water made quiet laughter about her sides. She swung around and pointed back the way she had come. Holden, in the stern, saw the dim loom of the second ship, and traced out her masts against the starless sky. They slanted a little. This ship was not upon an even keel.

Patiently he waited for the dawn. Leaning over the rail, he first noticed the great silence. He heard nothing—neither the sigh of a wave nor the call of a bird, nor even the creak of a spar. Now that the brig was still, the water chuckled no more. Wind there was none to whisper in the shrouds, to urge a swell along the hidden beach. No fish leaped in the dark stream. If land lay out there, it was a strange land, barren of life—a dead land.

Gray touched the sky and stole downward. How swiftly, Holden thought, the hours had passed! Darkness faded to twilight, twilight fled before cold dawn.

He saw the water, placid, stirless; he saw the shore, and the black hills beyond. He saw the ships that Old Danny had seen—Old Danny and how many more?—hundreds of ships, hundreds and hundreds of gaunt skeletons that had been ships. He saw the wide stream vanish in the hills, and knew that its current flowed on through the land to some far sea beyond. He saw all the lifeless desolation of that great gray space, and knew that he saw what no man had been meant to see.

The crew were on deck now, talking, chattering, laughing, greed in their mouths and in their eyes. Now that the light was come, they were no longer afraid. They had a stout ship underneath their feet, and there was nothing to fear.

The mate came up and clapped Holden jovially on the back.

"Here we are at last, eh?" he said.

"And here we stay," returned Holden.

"Don't be so darned gloomy," said

the bearded man. He pointed inland to where the gray inlet vanished in the hills. "What's up there? All we've got to do is let the current drift us on, an' it 'll take us to the open sea. This ain't a river—it's a strait between two lumps o' land."

"I think you're right," Holden said.

"You bet I'm right! An' another thing—we're leavin' this place rich men. There'll be somethin' worth takin' in every one o' these ships!"

"Yes," agreed Holden.

Some of the crew went ashore in the longboat, headed by the captain, and, breaking into little groups, walked among the dead ships. Their cries rang eerily across the silent land, waking echoes that had slept for countless years. They clambered aboard a vessel here and there, vanished below, and reappeared, shouting unintelligibly and waving their arms. They were mad, Holden thought—mad to imagine for an instant that they could escape.

Later, he went ashore himself. It was with a sense of unreality that he felt his feet on solid earth. Slowly he walked among the ships, now and then standing still for a moment to gaze at them. Some were old—so old that he could but guess at the years they had lain here. Others, which he knew by their bluff bows and sturdy lines, had been built within the century. Oldest of all were the gaunt skeletons that lined the beach, these and the dark heaps of rotted timber. They might have come to this their last anchorage in the time of Captain Cook, and so have rested until their bolts had rusted through and their timbers fallen apart. The careless earth hid treasures there, Holden guessed.

On and on he went, searching always, half in hope and half in fear. Hunger and fatigue passed unnoticed. The hours merged one into another; but he sought in vain. Evidently the Southern Maid had not yet come to this dead land.

With evening he turned back toward

the brig, dully surprised that in his wandering he had covered so great a distance. Night closed down as he shoved the dinghy off. He rowed in darkness, and in darkness found his way aboard the whaler.

In the forecabin that night he heard strange tales, for the men were restless and talkative, their sluggish imaginations stirred by dreams of wealth. One had already found a fortune in pearls, another a few golden coins, another a great iron-bound chest, half buried in the sand, which he had failed either to stir or to open.

V

DAY came. The men went ashore armed with axes and shovels, and the din of their working startled the echoes of the silent hills. Under the direction of the skipper they dug where the bones of an old ship thrust up through the sand; but the only reward for their labors was a brass cannon rusted almost beyond recognition.

At midday they came aboard, sullen and silent; but again in the afternoon they went ashore, and for an hour devoted their energies to opening the box found the previous day. When at last the lid came off, they yelled like madmen and danced about the strand. Holden drew near and saw that the chest was filled with golden coin.

"Leave it there, lads," the skipper said. "We'll find some more before the day's done."

Holden wandered away and sat watching the dark water. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, it rose toward his feet. There was a tide here, then. He had guessed that, seeing no other way in which the ships could leave the stream. It was, he supposed, higher at certain seasons than at others.

A sudden distant shouting brought his glance back to the crew. He knew from their antics that they had made another discovery of treasure. Not yet had they realized that the dead ships were the spoil of the sea. Soon or late,

he thought grimly, the fact would be brought home to them. They were but shadows, and would pass as shadows. Only the ships were real.

They passed sooner even than he had expected. They were aboard a schooner that lay stranded near the quiet stream, singing and shouting, when night dropped down. The light of their lanterns glowed redly through the portholes and fell like splashes of blood on the still water.

Holden, alone aboard the brig, saw the schooner move. At first he thought he was dreaming. He peered closer. The water had risen until it lapped around the sides of the stranded ship. An hour ago she had been twenty good feet from the edge.

He came to his feet and opened his mouth to shout; then he hesitated. Where was the good? The men were doomed. Interference would save them for a few days, at most. The sea had marked them as its victims.

Leaning against the rail, he watched. Again the schooner moved, so slowly, so gently, that for all his watching he scarce noticed it. She was deeper in the water now, and her masts swayed a little against the sky. Would the doomed men notice?

Stealthily the schooner moved a few feet more, slid off the beach into deep water, and drifted out, gradually settling lower. For an instant, silence held; then a drunken man began to sing, and the uproar rose again.

The schooner went down by the bow, smoothly, swiftly. The shouting died to silence, waves washed against the shore, and that was all.

A long time passed before Holden moved. He had been thinking, facing the future with calm eyes. If he was to live aboard the brig, he must first make her clean. He would start at that when morning came. Then he would await the coming of the Southern Maid.

He would, he knew, have long to wait.

A born salesman strutting his stuff



The Demon Demonstrator

Ulias Skinner, of Crocksville, organizes a triumphant selling campaign for the Freezem Manufacturing Company

By W. R. Nager



HANDLING—or mishandling—the files in the office of a refrigerator manufacturing concern may not be such a hot job, but it has its compensations. Occasionally our correspondents give us quite a laugh, and we believe in telling the dull old world about it. Witness the case of Ulias Skinner. He even cracked a smile from E. L., our general manager, and that's why Ulias

got the job. His epistolary style is so distinctly his own that it will probably be best to let File 2268-S speak for itself.

CROCKSVILLE, OHIO,
July 24.

THE FREEZEM MFG. CO., NEW YORK, N. Y.,
DEAR SIR:

This is to let you know that I am open for the position of your representative in this city. I am sure that when you hear of my qualifications you will be overjoyed to get me as your rep.

Until lately I have been selling Ohow-

cold refrigerators here for Mr. Turnbolt. He's a hard nut, and you will see why I do not give him for reference. When I told him I was thinking of selling your machine, he says:

"What? Desert our ranks?"

I suppose he was thunderstruck at first, but he got over it quickly, for he said something about it being a good riddance, and I could consider myself fired. That didn't make me sore, as we Skinners are great for keeping our temper.

As you know, the Ohowcold line is too expensive for the average family, and your fifty-dollar Freezem Special is my reason for pulling the Benedict Arnold stunt. Then, too, I'm not a mere salesman, but a full-blooded demonstrator—indeed, I may say a demon demonstrator. I'm sure I can demonstrate your refrigerator to good advantage, and can sell one to each of our five thousand families; so please get the factory working overtime, because I expect the Freezem Specials to be moving soon like regular cold cakes.

As to terms, you may acquire my demon demonstrating services, at first, on a straight ten-per-cent commission basis, plus expenses. I am sure this will be satisfactory, and when you sign on the dotted line and send me a refrigerator I will start demonstrating. Perhaps you would prefer an ordinary salesman, but ordinary salesmanship is the bunk when a demon demonstrator is working.

If this meets with your approval, you'll find me here awaiting your refrigerator.

Your demonstrating friend,

ULIAS SKINNER.

NEW YORK CITY,
July 26.

MR. ULIAS SKINNER, CROCKSVILLE, OHIO,
DEAR SIR:

Our sales manager is a gambler, and we finally decided to give you two weeks' trial. Get hustling or get the ax. Refrigerator is being expressed. Please keep down the expenses. Expecting nation-wide results from your demon demonstrating abilities.

Cordially yours,

E. L. PERKINS, GENERAL MANAGER.

CROCKSVILLE, OHIO,
July 30.

MR. E. L. PERKINS, FREEZEM MFG. CO.,
NEW YORK, N. Y.

DEAR SIR:

Refrigerator received, and have already made a demonstration which has aroused the town. I am writing this from the county jail, so please excuse the pencil.

Upon receiving the refrigerator, I immediately removed the plug which runs to

the light socket, and attached a longer wire. Then I wheeled the Freezem Special on a wheelbarrow up Main Street. On the face of it I had hung a big sign, which read:

BUY A FIFTY-DOLLAR FREEZEM
SPECIAL!

THE ICE WHICH STAYS FROZE WHEN
FREEZED!

ULIAS SKINNER, REP.

The crowd that followed me was—well, there's only one word—multitudinous. I walked along with an unconcerned air, and finally stopped at the busiest corner. In demonstrating, of course, the attention of your audience is the whole thing. I held up my hand and said:

"Ladies and gentlemen! You will now see the Freezem Special freeze ice!"

They looked at me curiously as I took the ice pans from the refrigerator and filled them in the corner drug store. Then I removed a bulb from the city's White Way system—having already ascertained that the circuit carried the one-hundred-and-ten-volt, sixty-cycle current the Freezem motor calls for. At first I was going to plug into one of the corner lights, and it was lucky I exercised the usual Skinner caution and made inquiries, for these corner lights are fed by the twenty-three-hundred-volt mains, and the Freezem Special would have burned up, as well as your demonstrating demon, if I had.

When I screwed the plug into the White Way socket I could hear the Freezem give a little sigh, as it settled down to its cold job.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I began, "in this hot climate most of you spend at least fifty dollars a year for ice. Here's your chance to save money by buying a fifty-dollar Freezem Special. The first cost is the last"—and all that.

Every one was jamming around trying to get a look at the machine, and there wasn't room for a soul to walk except in the street. On the edge of the crowd I saw Mr. Turnbolt, who was grinning at me. As you will see, I might have expected something dirty from him, for, as I wrote in my last letter, Mr. Turnbolt is a hard nut, and not a laughing Willie.

Anyway, instead of expecting something, I began to brag up the Freezem Special once more. Then I saw the crowd opening up a passage, and the traffic coming in a hurry. He eyes me up and down, the way cops do, and if I'd had any fur on the back of my neck I imagine it would have raised up on end; but I hadn't.

"Have you a permit to sell that refrigerator?" he snaps, harsh like, just as if he thought I was a crook or something.

I saw he could take me to jail if I didn't watch my foot; so, with typical Skinner smartness, I drew myself up haughtily and said:

"I'm not selling anything, officer. I'm only demonstrating the Freezem Special."

I had him there, and he knew it. It's always well to be up on your law, because you never know just when you'll have to put down some flat-footer like I did then; but it didn't do me much good, for he just snorts:

"Move along and quit blocking the pavement, or I'll pull you in!"

Now I saw right away it wouldn't do me any good to argue with him any longer, so I hopped off the wheelbarrow and started edging across the street. Started was all I did, for the traffic just got tied up into a regular Gordon knot; and just as I got between two cars, the wheelbarrow stopped with a sudden jerk. I was still plugged into the socket, the wire stretching through the air behind me. I turned to go back and pull out the plug, but I couldn't get through, for the machines had jammed head to tail; and there I was with my Freezem Special in the middle of the street.

I couldn't go forward and I couldn't go back. The cop was trying to straighten out the tangle, and wasn't paying any attention to me, so I decided not to pay any more attention to him. I stood up on the wheelbarrow to harangue the mob some more.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I says, "the Freezem Special is the outstanding invention of the age! For only fifty dollars you get your ice almost for nothing!"

Suddenly I stopped, for I'd just conceived a grand idea—one that had me gasping.

"You men," I continues, "should consider what the Freezem Special will mean to you. When you leave your home in the morning, you can leave it safely, assured that no iceman is going to flirt with your wife!"

A big laugh goes up at this, and some of the ladies present blushed. Then the cop spied me again, and started climbing over the machines to get at me. I pretended I didn't see him, and opened the Freezem Special and pulled out a pan. Would you believe it?—that water was actually froze on top already. I held it up to the crowd.

"See!" I said. "Ice already! Real ice inside of ten minutes! All for fifty dollars!"

The crowd cheered something awful, and I imagine I could have sold some then and

there, only my customers couldn't get to me. The cop could, though, and he got his hands on me without losing any time.

Just as he did so, there came another interruption. A siren started blowing, and a fire truck rounded the corner below us, going at full speed and heading for the jam. I never saw so much movement in all my life. The people jumped for the stores, the machines climbed the pavement, and Fallen Arches and I headed for the jail. It was a trying ten minutes, but it only goes to show how well a demonstrating demon works under fire. I am sure that the sales manager will bear no more animosity toward me when he learns what a fine beginning I've made.

And now, before I close, I will just note my expenses to date. You can send me a check in the next mail.

Food and lodging, first week....	\$21.00
Wheelbarrow	8.98
Fine for causing traffic jam, using city's power, <i>et cetera</i>	50.00
Total	\$79.98

The judge said he was fining me the price of a Freezem Special. Then I bragged it up so that I think he'll buy one. Even the cop who arrested me is interested; so you see, no matter where I am, I get prospects.

Your demonstrating friend,

ULIAS SKINNER.

P. S.—I forgot to add that the fire truck smashed the Freezem into smithereens, so you'd better send me another for demonstration purposes.

U. SKINNER.

July 31.

I got out of jail this morning, so instead of mailing this letter I'll continue it with the day's business, and you'll see that I'm a hustler. The *Morning Blast* carried a big account of my demonstrating abilities, which was fine free advertising. I stopped the first chap I met on the street.

"Did you see the demonstration?" I asks, pointing to the paper.

He stares at me like I was mad or something, but when he sees the news item I'm pointing out, he grins.

"Sa-ay!" he chuckles. "Wasn't it a bear? That funny-looking guy on top of the wheelbarrow had—"

He stops then and stares at me hard, for I was drawing myself up real proud, as we Skinners can when riled. Even if we're not very beautiful, it's nobody's business, and we don't allow any one to prod us too hard.

"You are speaking to Ulias Skinner," I says real cold.

At that he sort of hides his head in his sleeve, and mumbles:

"I'm sorry I can't buy a Freezem. You see I'm not married;" and he beats it down the street.

I was considering what to do next when I accidentally bumped into Joe Smead; and having bumped against him—not hard, you understand—I got the grand idea—and I pumped him by the hand. Excuse the poetry. It's a gift that runs in we Skinners.

"Joe," I says effusively, "how are you?"

Joe and I have been good friends since our school days.

"Not bad," he comes back.

"What are you doing?" I asks him.

"Living on my beauty."

That was Joe, all right. Believe little Ulias, there was meaning in his wit; for if any one could make use of his charm it was Joe. When he winked an eye, there was a female stampede like when Crocksville had its first beauty show. He'd go down to Lake Wehaveit for a few weeks, and pick up enough coin as a professional dancer to ease himself around for another two or three months. He was on one of these indolent spells just now, and I saw I'd have to bear down hard on our friendship to get him to help me out.

"Joe," I says, "why don't you get a job?"

"What for?" he comes back, a little insulted.

"Why—why," I stammers, "for the example to the younger generation."

He laughs at that.

"Believe me, Ul, the younger generation can take care of themselves."

I was silent then, and saw that I'd have to veer my attack.

"Joe," I says at length, "I'm serious. I'm going to get you a job. How would you like to make a hundred dollars a week?"

"Listens all right," he agrees. "What doing?"

I didn't answer that question, for I knew Joe wasn't much on work, and what I had in mind was work, and plenty of it.

"It's this way, Joe," I hedges. "We've been friends since I did your arithmetic problems for you, when we were both knee high. Now I've got a problem. I can't tell you what it is right now; but if you'll take this job for a couple of weeks, I'll pay you well, and get you something easier later on. Will you help me out, Joe?"

"If it's not too hard," says Joe.

"It's pretty hard work, Joe; but it's make or break with me. I'm just asking you for old times' sake."

"Spit it," he agrees, at that. "If it won't

kill me, I'll help you out for a couple of weeks."

"The Dovetail Ice Company is advertising for a man to help deliver ice," I told him. They weren't, but that didn't matter. I'll pay you seventy-five a week to take the job, and you'll get twenty-five from them. I'll tell them you'll report in the morning."

"No longer than two weeks," he reiterates.

"No longer. Maybe only for one week."

We shook hands on that, and I gave a sigh of relief as he left.

Now, I suppose you are wondering why I've hired Joe to take a job delivering ice when I'm selling Freezem Specials; but you'll see that there was sense in my method. When Joe Smead delivers a cake of ice, he'll do it in typical Joe Smead fashion. His clothes will shine, his face will beam, his brow will twinkle. That's Joe for you. You can picture the tired housewife when he walks in. She'll throw up her hands and think—if she doesn't say it:

"My hero!"

Which, to my way of thinking, will be the end of the ice box. As soon as friend hubby learns that Joe Smead is delivering ice, he'll just have to buy a Freezem for his own peace of mind.

Of course I do not insist that thinking up such clever ideas is part of a demonstrating demon's duties, but to get the Freezem established I'm willing to lend my fertilized imagination to that end. Now that you realize my strategy, I can imagine how tickled you are when you think that you have procured my services in Crocksville.

I had to do more contriving to get Joe on the Dovetail Ice force, for at first they said they didn't need a man. When I told him Joe wanted the job for the exercise, and I was willing to pay his salary of twenty-five dollars a week, the manager finally agreed. This will make Joe cost us a hundred dollars a week, which may seem a bit steep to you, but take my word that he's worth it. Besides, that's what an expense account is for.

I also told the manager to put Joe on the biggest route and work him hard. He said he would, as his brother-in-law ran that truck, and he would just lay the helper off for a few weeks.

Then I rented an empty store right next to the Crocksville National Bank. The owner wanted four hundred a month for it, as it's in the very heart of the town, but I finally got it for three seventy-five, so you see I am trying to keep down expenses. We have a live location, and I had a fine big sign painted. I also hired a boy to tidy

up a bit, and to distribute some handbills I had printed.

Altogether it's been a busy day, and you may imagine how tired I feel after not getting much sleep in jail last night.

Please ship two or three Freezems right away, and I'll start unloading them at once.

Your demonstrating friend,

ULIAS SKINNER.

P. S.—I almost forgot to inclose an itemized bill of my expenses.

Brought forward	\$79.98
Rent of store, one month.....	375.00
Joe Smead, one week.....	100.00
Boy's salary, one week.....	12.00
Sign and handbills.....	43.75
Total	\$610.73

NEW YORK, N. Y., 2.35 P.M., August 2.
ULIAS SKINNER, Crocksville, Ohio.

You are fired. Pay your own bills. Did you think you were selling Rolls-Royces?

E. L. PERKINS.

CROCKSVILLE, OHIO,

August 2.

MR. E. L. PERKINS, FREEZEM MFG. CO.,
DEAR SIR:

Joe Smead is a great hit! I have orders on hand for more than two hundred Freezem Specials. Every man that comes in says that when the ice companies put Apolluses on the trucks, he's done with them. You had better ship me a thousand Freezems right away, as I've got Joe changed to a new route, and we'll soon have more prospects. I wish you'd hurry the Freezems, for some of my customers want them right away, and I'm afraid they'll do something to Joe, or maybe to me, if they don't get a machine installed at once.

I'm ignoring your order stating that I'm fired; but if you still insist, I will take all my customers to the Ohowcold people, though I do not like Mr. Turnbolt, him being a hard nut, as I've told you before.

The whole thing in an egg shell, as you will no doubt agree, is that I'm a demonstrating demon, and know my refrigerators. I'm not bragging, but we Skinners have our pride, like the Smeads and the Turnbolts, and maybe the Perkinses, too, for all that; so, if you do not think I'm a bargain for ten per cent and expenses, say so.

And now I will close, as I expect four hundred sales to-morrow—which is a lot for me to handle, not being a salesman but a demonstrator. Write at once, and ship express before I get incapacitated.

Your demonstrating friend,

ULIAS SKINNER.

NEW YORK, N. Y., 9.08 A.M., August 4.

ULIAS SKINNER, Crocksville, Ohio.

Services retained. Fifty a week salary offered. Two thousand refrigerators shipped and two men to help.

E. L. PERKINS.

CROCKSVILLE, OHIO,

August 5.

MR. E. L. PERKINS, FREEZEM MFG. CO.,

DEAR SIR:

Sold five hundred and fifty Freezems in the last two days. I have orders for seven hundred and seventy-eight in all, and another thousand prospects. You had better ship more right away.

I appreciate your salary offer a lot, but am sorry I cannot take it. I am leaving Crocksville at once, so when you send me my commission, and a man to take charge, I will bid you adieu.

You see, I neglected to state that Joe Smead is married. To-day his wife came down here looking for me, and if I hadn't seen her coming, and used my Skinner smartness, I might not be writing you this now. I slipped out by the back door, leaving the boy in charge, and when I came back the kid was just purple. Seems she had been waving a gun around reckless, threatening to shoot the man who put her husband in the way of temptation. She's always kept her eye on Joe before, but she couldn't very well help him deliver ice.

You will understand why I am leaving the Freezem people. It has been a pleasure to demonstrate the Freezem Special, but when it is a question of giving up demonstrating forever, there is sometimes wisdom in retreat, as Napoleon said—or maybe it was George Washington.

Hoping this finds you as it finds me, which is very cautious, I am as usual,

Your demonstrating friend,

ULIAS SKINNER.

I will not put a P. S. on this letter, as I have no more expenses to send in.

NEW YORK, N. Y., 10.40 A.M., August 7.

MR. ULIAS SKINNER, Crocksville, Ohio.

Am sending man to take charge. Offer you hundred a week to demonstrate in next county headquarters at Crocksville. Will send a New York Apollo to aid you.

E. L. PERKINS.

Well, the upshot was that Ulias accepted, and is now one of the trusted high-power salesmen of the company; but he doesn't call himself that. He is still the demon demonstrator of old.

Forewarned

By Don Cameron Shafer

The first thing that old Lafe Stoner encountered in the big woods was surely an omen of the extraordinary bad luck that awaited him



BLACK, feline form, indistinct and shadowy, flashed across the old tote road fifty yards ahead of Lafe Stoner in the early dusk of a short November day.

"Hoodooed!" cried the old woodsman, voicing surprise as well as chagrin. "Hoodooed right at the start!"

Lafe spoke in all seriousness, although there was no one to hear, for he was as superstitious as any Indian, firmly believing in good luck and bad, and in an endless variety of signs and omens.

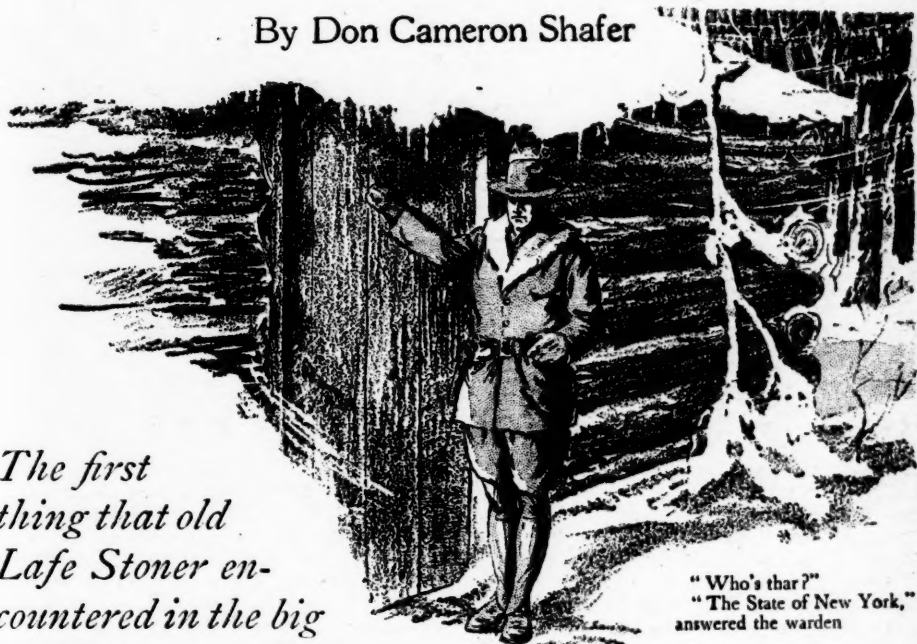
"Devil take them fool campers

who're always leavin' a cat behind to starve in the big woods!"

To this ignorant and superstitious old man a black cat walking across his path in the evening was the infallible promise of early misfortune. It augured nothing else but bad luck right at the very beginning of the trapping season, when, if ever, he needed lots of good luck with fur so scarce as it had been of late in the mountains.

"Now I won't get enough skins to pay me for trailin' in!" he growled.

His bent and withered legs were for the back trail at once, although he had walked more than thirty miles into the big woods since daylight. Under any



"Who's thar?"
"The State of New York,"
answered the warden

other circumstances he would have abandoned his enterprise then and there; but now, even though misfortune seemed assured, he hesitated. There was still a chance that he might counteract this evil spell.

The old trapper's thin shoulders were bent beneath the weight of a heavy splint pack basket, wherein were all his supplies for the long winter ahead. In his knobby fist he held an ancient rifle, clutching it all the tighter now with the hope that it might lift this witch's curse. As he stood there in the forest road, on the brown carpet of fallen leaves, he was a shabbily dressed, grimy old man, looking innocent and inoffensive enough; but his cold gray eyes searched the shadows of the forest before him, actively alert, the merciless eyes of a killer.

"Jest one crack at ye," he muttered, his grimy right thumb drawing back the burred rifle hammer to full cock with an ominous double click, "an' I'll break this spell an' your back at the same time!"

He craned his wrinkled neck this way and that, searching for a glimpse of the black body over the rifle sights. In his hairy old ears was the steady rustle of dry leaves, marking the irregular course of the unseen animal as it moved in the thick underbrush against the wooded slope.

Suddenly the tinkle and crackle of dry leaves ceased. Though Lafe saw nothing, yet his forest-trained ears told him that the animal had stopped at the base of a huge gray beech, stripped of leaves, but still dotted with the open burrs of a heavy crop of nuts, which the frost had scattered upon the leaf-covered ground beneath. Noiselessly, his rifle ready, he moved slowly up the road, trying to locate the one living black shadow, among so many dark woodland shadows, that would be the crouching figure of the ill-omened beast.

Instead, he was astounded to see the elusive creature suddenly appear in the

upper branches of the beech, black as ink against the lighter evening sky, and moving too fast for any rifle shot. In his anger, however, Lafe would have chanced it, a bullet, had he not seen above his rifle barrel, just as his crooked forefinger was about to press the trigger, a second and smaller black shape still higher in the tall beech, racing up the naked branches with frantic leaps. When this other animal launched far out through space in a mighty leap to the top of a near-by hard maple, the climbing silhouette behind it never hesitated, but took the same long leap amid a mass of swaying and tossing branches.

"Ho, ho, ho, ho!" chuckled the old man, as the rifle came down from his shoulder. "I wisht I could be hoodooed like that every day this comin' winter!"

II

THOUGH pursued and pursuer were no more than black shadows against the greenish evening sky, moving through the swaying tree-tops with unbelievable speed, yet the chuckling old woodsman easily identified both.

"A black fisher cat," he said aloud, with grinning satisfaction, "chasin' a tree marten!"

No sight could have been more pleasing as he neared his trapping grounds for the fur season. Finding a dreaded omen of bad luck turned into a promise of rich pelts, he chuckled to himself as he hurried on along the bush-grown road in the wake of this woodland tragedy.

A tree marten, or sable, a deadly killer, pursued by that greatest of all killers, a pekan, or fisher! The old man watching from the tote road would have killed them both, if possible; but he might just as well have tried to shoot a swooping hawk. The frantic marten, with speed sufficient to overtake and catch the incredibly swift red squirrel, was pursued by a still swifter black demon.

In that half light, in the lace pattern of the tree-tops, both seemed to be as much bird as beast. The fleeing marten was a slender animal of weasel shape, about two feet in length to the tip of its bushy tail, and muscled with steel and rubber. It was only against a lighter sky that it looked black, its pelt being of a yellowish brown color, darker toward the rear, with head and throat almost white.

Behind it raced one of the largest and handsomest of the weasel family. The big male fisher was nearly three feet long, and weighed as much as a fox—about ten pounds. It did not seem possible that so large a beast could travel so fast through the swaying branches of the tree-tops.

The desperate marten, fleeing for its life, knew the advantage of its lighter weight. It kept to the smallest branches and took the most hazardous leaps, swinging like a spider monkey, climbing like a squirrel. Below it, on the larger limbs, the heavier animal ran still faster, and with marvelous skill.

"Have your fun," chuckled old Lafe, addressing the fisher. "You can't catch a tree marten!"

Lafe knew how fast martens were in the tree-tops, but his knowledge of fisher cats was more limited. They were not plentiful, and, being even more nocturnal than the martens, were seldom seen at their hunting.

"A red squirrel in a tree can dodge lightning," grinned Lafe, "but a marten can catch him!"

The chase continued in a wide circle around him, for the most part before his very eyes, but Lafe risked no shot at such a doubtful mark. He counted on trapping these valuable animals, and did not wish to frighten them away.

Few leaves were left on the trees, and he had a fairly good view of the tragedy. In desperation the frantic marten took a tremendous leap to the ground far below, its feet extended, its body flattened and stretched to offer as much air resistance as possible, but

nevertheless it struck with a heavy thud. For a second or two it was almost dazed, but then it was up and away again, dashing through the dry leaves to another tree.

The fisher was not far behind. He dropped swiftly to a large limb ten feet below, sprang instantly downward to another, and then leaped to the ground close behind his victim. The marten knew that its only hope was to reach a squirrel hole in a near-by hard maple. Once inside this small aperture it would be safe from the larger animal. It took the shortest possible route and used all its tremendous speed, but in the swaying top of a hemlock the fisher overtook it. A moment of struggling and squalling, the click of fending and striking teeth, and the marten was dead.

In those few seconds, well knowing that the fisher was too busy and too bloodthirsty to notice him, Lafe threw off his pack straps and ran forward, regardless of the noise made by his booted feet in the dry leaves. His rifle was poised and ready, and he hoped to get both animals. His eyes were so intently fastened upon the black shape against the sky that his foot struck an unseen root, and he stumbled and all but fell.

He recovered himself with a muttered oath, but the chance was lost. The victorious fisher saw him and leaped away, with the dead marten in its mouth. Keeping a network of branches and tree trunks between itself and the hunter, it ran off, low against the shadowy ridge, and vanished in the coming night.

"All right, all right!" Lafe panted. "I'll get you yet—you see if I don't! I'll pinch those black feet—you just wait! This place sure is rich with fur this season—an' me thinkin' I was hoodooed!"

III

EACH autumn, at the end of the deer hunting, Lafe trailed in through the

deserted forest to this little cabin for the winter trapping. Of late years, with the Adirondacks a great playground thronged with people all summer long, he could have made sufficient money as a guide for fishing and hunting parties to supply his simple wants for a twelvemonth in any small mountain village; but Lafe was one of those old time backwoodsmen who love solitude, who want to live off the country, who are not happy unless they are killing something.

He hated the smooth roads and the long lines of automobiles, he hated the well-dressed and talkative city visitors. He preferred to live by the gun. He knew no mercy and no game laws. All summer he sold venison to the unscrupulous proprietors of mountain resorts, so that their guests could return to the city and boast that they had had their fill of "mountain lamb." Often enough it was really lamb, and they never knew the difference.

Lafe also snared grouse, and sold them to wealthy sportsmen and city gourmards. He peddled trout from camp to camp. Then, when the mountain resorts were closed, and the roads all but empty again, he trailed in to his isolated forest cabin with a back load of supplies for the winter trapping.

"Home!" said he, as the split plank door opened to his eager fingers. He pronounced the familiar word as many old woodsmen do, to rime with "gum." "Home agin!"

His flaring match revealed the dark interior of a small, low-roofed log shack, no more than twelve by fourteen feet, a single room with a stone fireplace and without a window.

"It's a wonder some of them damned city hikers ain't managed to burn it down!" growled Lafe.

Everything was much as he had left it in the spring of that year. Deer mice had played there, squirrels had made a hole in the shake roof, and a porcupine had gnawed away a portion of the door frame; but the wall bunk,

the rude table, the bench, stood where he had placed them. He lit a candle and began unpacking, arranging his few supplies on a shelf along the wall. His scanty stock of salt pork, bacon, beans, flour, coffee, tea, and sugar seemed little to last a hard-working man five months; but Lafe fully intended to find his own meat as he always had found it.

He did not bother to light a fire, although a biting November chill descended with the night. He had eaten his dinner along the trail late in the afternoon, and would be wrapped in his warm blankets within a few minutes. He well knew that every stick of wood wasted meant more hard work with ax and saw.

"Hoodooed!" mused the old trapper, laughing again at this huge joke upon himself. "Thinkin' it was a witch cat when it was a prime fisher, an' jest as good as twenty-five dollars right in my pocket!"

A bony, dried out old fellow was Lafe Stoner, yet still possessed of surprising strength and endless endurance. Unkempt and uncouth, he wore ragged clothes, and his tanned, seamed, and oily face was covered with a short, curly beard as gray as an old rat's. His teeth were worn down to yellow stubs, and the whites of his eyes were clouded with age.

Nevertheless, for all these marks of the passing years, no young man in all the big woods could tramp farther in a day, with or without snowshoes, or endure more severe cold and hardship. He was of a long line of woodsmen and trappers, being related to the famous Nick Stoner himself. He came rightfully by the name of Lafayette, for the Stoners had been famous scouts and fighters in the Revolution.

"Last year I didn't ketch a fisher cat, nor the year afore that," he mused; "but I always said they'd come back agin."

Lafe was another of those ignorant old hunters who refuse to believe that

the best of the fur bearers are being exterminated by their guns. Always they assert, and believe, that the vanishing game will come back, as if it had but strayed away over the next hill. Lafe had not seen the mark of a fisher's foot in two years, but he fully believed that the animals were coming back again in their old-time numbers, and that he would take many prime pelts the coming winter.

"Fur is high," he muttered drowsily, in that sweet bliss preceding tired unconsciousness. "With sable and fisher cat back agin, I'll make a lot of money this season!"

IV

OUTSIDE in the starlit November night, chill with the freezing breath of approaching winter, the big fisher was hunting the hardwood ridges, where a heavy crop of beech nuts attracted birds and beasts. In shape this animal is very much like a large marten, being of the same family, though darker in color. A big weasel, bloodthirsty like all weasels, the swiftest and most deadly of the forest killers, the fisher, or pekan, is cousin german to the crafty wolverine, being smaller and less pugnacious, but quite as cunning. It is similarly related to the sly and sneaky mink, to the tree-loving marten, to the fish-eating otter, to the odoriferous skunk; and its nature combines most of the attributes, good and bad, of all its weasel relatives.

Like the marten, the pekan is essentially an animal of the trees. It is also quite at home upon the ground; but its sinewy, snaky body is too long and its fore legs are too short for fast traveling upon the earth, though perfectly adapted for running down squirrels and martens in the tree-tops. Just how it got the name of "fisher," by which all trappers know it, does not seem clear. Although it is as fond of fish as any mink or otter, it is not a water animal, and does not fish for itself.

During the preceding summer this

particular specimen had lived unobserved in a deep, heavily timbered hollow between two large mountains. On the approach of winter it had moved to higher ground, where, especially on the wind-swept ridges, there would be less snow and a harder crust for winter foraging. Food was scarce now in the swampy lowlands. The frogs were buried in the mud for their winter hibernation. Water fowl and migrating birds had flown south. Mice and squirrels had gone to the beech nut forests, and the few remaining martens had followed them.

On this night of Lafe's arrival in the woods the big pekan hunted in the vicinity of his cabin, not realizing that the old trapper within was confidently planning its death. A quick, nervous animal, it went flashing over the rocks and up and down trees, and running along windfalls and old logs, its keen nose searching out every hint of something to kill and eat. Crossing a bit of wild meadow with a peculiar crouching, bounding gait, it leaped swiftly to the left and struck down a jumping deer mouse. This in itself was an almost incredible feat, for these small rodents were so named by the Indians because they can jump like a startled deer. When alarmed, they go bounding away in a series of leaps as much as ten feet long.

Food was not so plentiful, and the demands of the fisher's large and active body were pressing. From an old broken stump the hungry beast scented a small covey of grouse roosting in the dense foliage of a low spruce. As quietly as possible for so large an animal, it tried to sneak up into the tree and surprise one of the birds; but the old hen was familiar with this trick, and slept with one eye and one ear open. Hearing the faint scratch of a claw upon the shaggy bark, she gave a warning cluck, and, as the fisher came dashing in, there was a roar of strong wings as the brood took flight.

Progressing on through the trees, it

came to a squirrel den in a beech; but the crafty red squirrel had gnawed out the smallest possible entrance to the hollow within, purposely to exclude such enemies as the larger marten and the fisher. The black terror stayed there for some time, sniffing and snorting, blowing its hot breath into the hole, hoping to frighten out the squirrel, but without result. Chickaree knew the hopelessness of flight as well as the safety of its home.

Along a small brook three young raccoons feeding on the beech mast offered a tempting meal; but, as the fisher came leaping hungrily up, a big and vicious female rose out of a nearby hollow and lunged fearlessly forward to give battle. The pekan was big enough and deadly enough to kill any ordinary raccoon in a fair fight, but this mother came leaping and snarling in as if she meant business and would die hard.

It was well that the fisher changed its mind, for just behind her there was a small pool of deep water, into which she meant to drag her antagonist if the result of the fight was doubtful. In the water she was more than a match for any fisher.

At last, in the pale gray of dawn, the hungry animal came upon a lumbering porcupine, and dared what no other killer of the forest has the courage to attempt or the vitality to endure. The porcupine made no effort to escape by flight. Its speed was nothing—a slow and lurching walk, a clumsy gallop. With all confidence in its deadly armor, which even a famished bear will respect, it crouched flat on the ground, its forepaws curled beneath its breast, its nose tucked in, bristling with sharp and dangerous quills on every side.

As the fisher leaped forward, the quilled tail lashed out to meet the charge. Seemingly without any regard for its own safety, the big weasel flashed in and out with bewildering leaps. Then, suddenly striking with an

armed forepaw, it threw the porcupine over on its back and leaped in to gash its unprotected throat.

Swift as was the attack, the porcupine's spiny tail was even quicker. As the pekan leaped snarling back from its dying victim, its nose and breast and forepaws were stabbed by a score of barbed quills; but these were quickly pulled out or broken off.

For some unknown reason the pekan seems to be immune to death from porcupine quills, which cause festering sores in other animals. The skin of almost every fisher taken in the Adirondacks is found to have been pierced again and again by quills working out of the beast's flesh. Doubtless some of them do perish in this way, and their bodies are not found, for it seems almost certain that the sharp, barbed quills would sometimes reach a vital spot; but it is quite certain that this is the only animal that kills and eats porcupines and lives to eat again.

V

As soon as he had cut a good pile of wood, old Lafe put out his traps. He began almost at the cabin door with a raccoon set, and day after day he extended his lines farther and farther into the surrounding forest. He made water sets for muskrats in a near-by swamp, where their dome-shaped houses of mud and sod raised above the dead rushes. He built mink pens along every stream. On the rocky heights he prepared baited sets for lynx and fox.

The traps extended in two irregular lines, which no one but a born woodsman could have remembered or followed, up and down, here and there, zigzagging this way and that, but always bringing him back to the little cabin at night. He covered one of these lines one day and the other the next.

Along the ridges of the northern route, the longer of the two, Lafe put out what he called his "sable line."

This consisted of about ten traps to the mile, for several miles, set purposely for marten, or sable. He did not own a sufficient number of steel traps for the whole line, but it was easy to make deadfalls that were just as efficient.

From the nearest large tree he split out long chips, which were driven into the ground in a rude circular pen, leaving a convenient doorway. He covered the pen with brushwood, and before the entrance he balanced a heavy log, which, in turn, was supported by a framework of three notched sticks in the shape of the figure four. The end of the longest stick projected back into the pen, and was sharpened to receive the bait—a bit of venison, a squirrel if Lafe could get it, or a small bird.

The old trapper had with him a small fyke net, which is really a fish trap, and this he set in a deep hole in a near-by trout stream. It kept him supplied with a welcome change of diet, as well as plenty of additional bait for his traps. There is nothing quite so tempting to most of the fur bearers as a dead fish.

Not until the first snow fell, and his traps were all set, did Lafe see anything more of the fisher. The first evidence of the animal's presence was disconcerting, to say the least.

"You old black devil, you!"

Lafe stood there in the snow, which was not yet deep enough to require webs, and surveyed the ruins of a marten set. This was his first trip over his newly established sable line, and there in the trampled snow lay the scanty remains of his first catch, a fine dark marten. A few wisps of soft fur blowing over the white snow, a wide blotch of crimson, a few pink bones—that was all that was left of a twenty-dollar skin.

"You'll pay for that with your own hide!" promised Lafe, in a loud and angry voice. "You see if you don't!"

He who could not read a word of print read that trampled snow as easily as a scholar reads his books. He saw

that the fisher had come up from the south, following the ridges, and, after the kill, had gone north again, evidencing that this was part of an established hunting territory and on a regular route.

For a long way Lafe followed the robber's tracks, hot for vengeance; but soon the fisher left the snow for the trees, and the trail was lost.

"He'll be back," said the old trapper, not without sorrow, for well he knew that every visit would mean a loss if there was a marten in a trap to be destroyed. "But let me tell ye somethin'—that kind of fun with the old man has jest one endin'. I'll stretch your pelt on a dryin' board!"

Lafe changed the location of the marten set, rebuilding it at a distance from the unlucky spot. When it was done, he placed a heavy steel fox trap in the snow behind the pen, and carefully dusted it over with dry pine needles and fluffy snow.

"Try that agin," said he, "an' see if you ain't surprised!"

Twice more along his sable line Lafe prepared these double sets, in anticipation of other nocturnal visits from the big fisher. He knew that, sooner or later, the hungry beast would come back, either to rob the traps or to steal the bait. His ten long miles through the forest yielded nothing, for the one fur that would have paid him well for the trip had been destroyed.

"A bad start," admitted Lafe; "but a few fisher skins'll make up for it!"

VI

THE fisher is not mischievous and malicious, like its cousin, the larger wolverine, which is very scarce, if not entirely extinct, in the Adirondacks. It does not destroy traps for the sheer pleasure of bedeviling trappers; but this particular specimen soon discovered that it could pick up an easy living by raiding Lafe's trap lines.

Marten were very scarce, being always easy to trap, and squirrels came

out in the cold weather no more than necessary. Consequently, the hungry pekan looked upon the trapper as a benevolent old gentleman who went through the woods every day, putting out dainties for it to eat; and Lafe soon grew to know it as a night prowling devil of destruction.

Night after night it raided the trap lines. That it was not caught in Lafe's skillfully prepared sets was due more to good luck than to its superior intelligence, although the old trapper laid its immunity to other and more sinister causes.

Like most predatory animals, this fisher had a more or less regular "beat" over which it hunted, the whole route extending for miles and requiring several days to circle. Often enough it happened not to visit Lafe's best traps, so cunningly set for its prowling black feet. Or it broke into the pens from the side where no traps were hidden beneath the snow. Sometimes a bit of man scent clinging to the frosted iron betrayed the dangerous presence of the traps, and the pekan broke into Lafe's pens from the other side.

No beast, however—not even a fisher—has continuous good luck. One night, while circling an open spring hole, it accidentally stepped into a muskrat snare. The chain of this small trap was fastened to a "tangle stick"—a willow wand thrust into the muddy bottom of the deeper water, around which the chain would wind to drown the trapped muskrat. The infuriated fisher, larger and more powerful, jerked trap and all out upon the bank, and soon tore an imprisoned forefoot from the comparatively weak jaws.

When Lafe saw what had happened, he was furious with rage.

"That black devil walks around every fox trap I've got," he cried, "an' then steps into that little mousetrap!"

For a few days he had peace, and caught a fine mink, a raccoon, and a kit fox. The little muskrat trap had

been powerful enough to bruise the fisher's foot quite badly. It rested up three or four days before starting out again, more hungry than ever.

Lafe was as sly as a fox and as cunning as any wolverine. He resented any interference with his killing. He knew no law but the law of the hunt, and held that all wild game belonged to those who could get it. For years he and his kind had been at war with the State and the game wardens. Now the big woods were a great State park, with an army of wardens, and there was no telling when they might come prowling around.

With this knowledge came caution, instead of the open defiance which he no longer dared. Lafe still killed, in season and out, but he did not do it so brazenly. In the old days he had killed what deer he wanted for his winter meat, and had hung the hog-dressed carcasses up near his cabin to freeze. He no longer dared to do this so openly, but he killed deer in their winter yards, one at a time.

He brought the meat home on his back, and buried it in the snow beneath the hard-packed pathway before his cabin door, where there would be no betraying tracks. When he needed a piece of it he dug it up, cut off what he wanted with an ax, and reburied it with the greatest care. He knew that there was no longer absolute solitude or privacy in the big woods. Sooner or later a warden would pay him a visit; but it would take a good man to find the hidden deer meat!

One night, while Lafe was cooking a nice venison supper after a long day on his trap lines, the big pekan caught a whiff of the cooking meat from afar. This brought the hungry animal toward the trapper's cabin. Coming up the pathway, it easily scented the place where Lafe had buried the venison, and its sharp nails speedily tore a way down through the hard-packed snow until the frozen meat was exposed. Not able to

carry away such heavy pieces, it spent most of the night there gnawing at the ice-hard feast.

Early next morning, while Lafe was getting breakfast, the inevitable game warden rapped at the door.

"Who's thar?" growled Lafe in his most unfriendly voice.

"The State of New York," answered the warden.

"What do y' want here?" snarled the trapper, like a surly old bear disturbed at his meal.

"You!" replied the officer of the law, crowding indoors.

"You ain't got nothin' on me!"

"About half a deer," said the warden, grinning.

When Lafe saw that the fisher had exposed his cache at this most inopportune time, he almost forgot his hatred of game laws and game wardens in his explosive wrath.

"You sneakin', low-down cousin of a skunk!" he roared. "I had a hunch right at the start you was bad luck, an' now I know it!"

Lafe was furious at being caught, but he still had a card to play. More than three feet of soft, newly fallen snow covered the whole North Woods. It was many long and leg-weary miles on webs to the justice of the peace.

"Well, what of it?" he demanded brazenly. "I got to eat, ain't I? What you goin' to do about it?"

"I'm going to take you out, that's what," replied the warden firmly.

"Set down an' eat," invited Lafe. "You'll need all your strength."

"I won't need anything but this," said the other man, tapping his belt gun significantly.

"Amuse yourself with that toy after you eat," chuckled Lafe. "In the meantime, try an' think up some better way to make me walk out to my own funeral."

When they had finished the simple meal of pancakes and fried venison, the warden wiped his lips on a blue handkerchief and drew his gun.

"Get yourself ready," he told Lafe. "We're going out."

"I'm so pestered an' disgusted with smart game wardens," said the old trapper, "it fairly makes me ache to die. Go ahead an' shoot when you're ready. I've almost outlived the huntin' an' trappin', anyway."

The warden saw that he was checkmated. He could not shoot the old man, and he could not carry Lafe thirty miles through the woods on snowshoes.

"All right!" he concluded. "You can stay here by your lonesome; but when you come out next spring you'll find a warrant waiting for you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Lafe. "Don't forget to take your evidence with you. You better pickle it till you need it next summer!"

He turned again to his housework, paying no attention to the baffled warden.

"I'll take the meat, anyhow," declared the warden.

"Help yourself," said Lafe. "I know where there's lots more."

"If I catch you shootin' yarded deer, I'll make you a lot of trouble."

"Try an' ketch me!" retorted Lafe.

"I'm not done with you yet."

"Drop in any time!"

When the warden had gone, Lafe gathered up all his spare traps, took his rifle, and went out.

"I'll make some trouble for you, too!" he muttered, talking to an invisible black shadow somewhere out in the dark and somber spruce forest. "I won't rest night or day till I stretch your black belt!"

He dropped a sapling against a tree, so that it lodged slantingly in a low fork. A little way up the sapling he cut a flat notch just large enough to receive a heavy steel trap, and above the trap he hung a fish. The sapling would make a natural runway for the pekan if it scented the bait and tried to reach it.

He also built a double deadfall, with

a drop log on each side. In his pocket he always carried a lucky stone, firmly believing in its potency, and now, as an emergency measure, he laid this cherished talisman on the top of the pen.

Next morning it had disappeared. Neither trap had been sprung, and there wasn't a mark in the surrounding snow to show what had become of the stone, but it had vanished.

"I knowed there was more to this than jest bad luck," Lafe groaned. "I'll have to get that black devil or get out of the woods!"

As a matter of fact, a mischievous blue jay had seen Lafe put the lucky stone there. As soon as he went away the bird flew down and carried it away, only to drop it in the snow when it proved to be inedible.

"I'm going to try some scent," the old trapper decided.

On a shelf in his cabin Lafe kept an array of old bottles containing strange concoctions of fish oil, animal glands, and such like, smelling to heaven, but remarkably efficient in many cases. Many a wily fox and mink he had caught, when all other bait failed, with these odoriferous preparations. The next day he made three very careful sets along the fisher's route, using his most powerful steel traps and the overwhelming scent that he used for catching foxes.

VII

COLD nights and strong winter winds had crusted over the deep snow, except in the sheltered spruce forests, and over this came a thin coating of powdered frost as the terrible cold pinched the last bit of moisture out of the air. The crust was strong enough to hold all the smaller animals, but Lafe had to wear snowshoes whenever he stepped out of the beaten paths about his little cabin. In the sheltered places, where the snow had not been harried by the wind, it was six feet deep.

The old trapper shuffled along

through the big woods on creaking webs, his grizzled head bent forward, his eyes always searching the snow for some sign, some mark of hunting fox, wandering lynx, or foraging sable. Crossing the head of a deep ravine, he stopped to examine a peculiar trail on the snow before him.

"Maybe this is the day," he said hopefully.

But misgivings of bad luck would not be shaken off by any optimistic imagining. As he followed the easily recognized trail of the fisher, climbing up a steep hillside, a puff of wind sent a bit of reddish fur dancing over the white snow before him.

"You Injun devil, you!" screamed Lafe in sudden fury.

He hurried up the hill, and there before him were the scattered remains of a fine red fox that had fallen victim to his scent lure. The prowling fisher had come upon the trapped animal during the night and had destroyed it. The old man fairly trembled with rage. The seams of his wrinkled face pulled deeper, and his purple lips mouthed a stream of oaths.

"I won't stand for bein' robbed night after night!"

He pulled the trap, now that the fox was gone, and went on, still muttering hoarsely in his beard. By the time he had reached the brook below, where he had a mink trap set, his vocabulary was exhausted, and he could only groan when he saw that a mink had been taken.

"I'd shoot any man that took that amount of fur out of my sets," roared Lafe, "an' I won't stand for it from no varmint that ever run the big woods!"

Farther on, a steel trap on a marten runway held the tiny forefoot of a white weasel, or ermine. Few animals will eat these vicious but insignificant little creatures, but the fisher, though a near relative, was not content until it had torn the tiny body loose from the trap and destroyed it.

"It ain't much of a loss, so far as the fur goes," said Lafe, "but it's the principle of it that grinds me."

Fur was scarce. The fur bearers had not come back as Lafe had hoped. If his carefully set traps caught one mink, one marten, one fox, or one lynx each day, he was lucky; and to have this small amount of fur taken or destroyed by the big pekan was almost more than the old man could bear. Except that he hated to admit, even to himself, that he had been bested and outwitted by an ordinary fisher cat, he would have accepted all this as inevitable bad luck duly foretold, and would have pulled his traps; but he was a master trapper, who prided himself on being able to catch any animal, and it wounded his self-respect to admit failure.

"I ain't makin' 'nough fur to pay for my pancakes," he protested. "I won't make nothin', neither, till I get that black cat!"

It was hopeless to try to hunt down the night-prowling animal. No matter how far he might succeed in tracking it upon the snow, Lafe knew that sooner or later it would take to the trees, where nothing could follow its trail. At that very moment, having dined well at Lafe's expense, it was undoubtedly sleeping warm and comfortable in some hollow tree. Only a little way ahead Lafe saw where the fisher, no longer hungry, had taken to the trees and abandoned the trap line.

Sighing with relief, he went on along the line. He found that the dangling steel trap of a marten set, on the top of a windfall, held the frozen body of a small sable. It was not a first-rate skin, but Lafe was thankful to discover that it had escaped destruction.

"If it had been a prime pelt, I'd 'a' lost it," he growled.

With the bitter words came an idea, a sudden inspiration.

"If it's fur you want," he chuckled to himself, "you shall have it!"

He set down his rifle and unsheathed his belt ax. Right there in the snow

he built a marten deadfall, complete in every detail—a circular pen of long, heavy chips, a roof of boughs, the bait, the fall log—everything. When this was done to his satisfaction, he laid the dead body of the marten underneath the fall log, as naturally as if the little beast had met its fate there while reaching for the tempting bait.

Then, in a circle about the dead marten, Lafe buried four heavy fox traps, each fastened to a drag. Over these he sifted powdered snow, fanning it all smooth with his old hat.

"Steal that fur if you dare!" he cried.

VIII

THE great hare of the north puts on an invisible coat of white with the first snow of winter. Under the pale moon it passes like a ghostly shadow of the night through the dark evergreen wood. Always its delicate nose is twitching and sniffing the cold night air, so pure that the faintest animal scent is detected for incredible distances. Always its big mule ears are twisting and turning for some sound of enemies, of which it has so many.

No other animal of the big woods is so pursued and persecuted. Every sharp claw and every ivory fang are against it. It has no haven of refuge. For its protection it has only its invisible cloak and its tremendous speed.

Nothing must hamper its race with death. Its hind legs are twice as long as its front legs. Its hairy feet are big and broad, to hold its light body on the surface of the snow. The fastest fox and the best hound cannot run it down in a fair chase.

The hunting fisher, slower on the ground than a fox, jumped a big hare from its form beneath a snow-covered evergreen. The terrified rodent dashed away like a streak of light. The undulating, smooth-flowing body of the pursuing fisher was fast, even on the frozen snow, but nowhere near as fast as the big hare. From the start it

seemed a hopeless chase, as the endurance of these big hares is almost as remarkable as their speed; but the fisher was as relentless as death itself. Where opportunity afforded, and the hare was in sight, it leaped to the trees, where it ran like a black streak. It was able to see the hare circling and to cut across through the branches.

Early the next morning Lafe, covering his sable line, came upon the tracks of the fisher and the hare.

"Chasin' a white rabbit!" he exclaimed. "A tree animal has no business on the ground, an' the fastest hound couldn't win that race."

More out of curiosity than anything else he followed the trail for some distance, as it extended in the general direction in which he was going. Where the marks of the running hare were not overlapped by the trail of the pursuer, Lafe guessed that the fisher had followed faster through the trees. Twice he saw where the killer had leaped down from the trees at the dodging hare, but had missed.

At last he found a crimson splotch on the white snow.

"I'll be durned!" he exclaimed. "I never'd 'a' believed it, if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes!"

The tracks in the trampled snow told him better than words what had happened there in the moonlight.

"More of my bad luck!" groaned Lafe. "Now he's fed up agin, an' won't bother the traps I sot specially to get him."

Climbing up the wooded slope of a steep ridge, his panting breath hissing in a white fog from his open mouth, steaming wet from his own exertions, although the temperature was thirty below zero, Lafe stopped to rest, leaning against the smooth white bole of a paper birch. All was as still as an empty world.

This was the winter solitude that the old trapper loved. Before his eyes stretched miles and miles of unbroken forest and blue mountains.

Suddenly the silence was broken by the faint but unmistakable metallic clank of steel. Lafe whirled about and listened, holding his breath.

Again he heard that *clink, clink*, from the top of the ridge before him. His rigid face broke into a grin.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he chuckled, almost inaudibly. "I've got you now, right where I want you!"

He had recognized the sound as the clank of a small chain on one of the fox traps before the false marten set on the top of the ridge. Though he could see nothing, and there were no tracks in the snow about him, he felt that his luck had changed at last.

IX

LAKE ran scrambling up the slope, as if the powerful fox traps might fail to hold. In his mad haste one shoe caught on a stub and threw him heavily forward. With an oath he was up again, flinging the clinging snow from his arms and his rifle, flinching as it melted on his warm wrists and ran down into his mittens, dashing over the crust to where he could see the trap.

"Ho, ho, ho!" he cackled in triumphant glee. "Now I'll break this hoo-doo an' your back at the same time!"

Before his gloating eyes was the brown body of the fisher, crouching over a fox trap snapped tight to its right forefoot.

"I cotched you, jest as I said I would, didn't I?"

It was the largest and handsomest fisher that Lafe had ever seen. Its skin was a rich dark brown, as beautiful as any silver fox, almost black toward the rounded hips, and jet beneath. Trapped but not terrified, the captive animal knew that this was death, but it was ready and willing to meet its fate with unabated courage, with claw and fang and murderous fury, fighting to the last gasp. Its broad oval head, frosted white with silver-tipped hairs, was held low to the snow, its short ears were turned back, its dark eyes blazed red ferocity, its white fangs were bared.

"The bad luck has run out at last," cackled Lafe, as he came up. "You won't ever rob no more traps, an' I'll sell that rich pelt for enough to pay for what you stole from me!"

In his eagerness he maneuvered sideways, so as to shoot the trapped animal through the head. Ordinarily he would have cut a long pole and killed it without wasting a cartridge or risking damage to the valuable skin; but now, desperate after his long run of bad luck, he took no chance.

As he circled, the courageous fisher turned to face him, and a faint cat hissing warned the man not to come too close. Lafe knew that he was threatening death to a fearless and powerful animal, but, armed with the rifle, he was not afraid of anything. Unable to get a side shot, he stepped in, thinking to shoot directly downward through the animal's head without injuring the body.

Before he could pull the trigger, the desperate fisher suddenly leaped the length of the trap chain, and was almost at Lafe's hairy throat before the old man could jump back to avoid its vicious charge. Surprised, forced to leap without preparation, Lafe's right foot twisted in the snowshoe harness and broke through the light hickory framework, so that he fell sidewise in the snow.

Before he could scramble up again, the infuriated animal was upon him, using all its fighting strength to pull the trap and the drag log through the snow. Had not the pekan been thus encumbered, it might have gone hard with the old man, caught at such a disadvantage, with one foot floundering helplessly in the deep snow in a tangle of rawhide lacing and broken wood.

Lafe came scrambling upright with the fisher gashing at his fending forearms, which, fortunately, were well protected with clothing, because of the severe weather. He knocked the snarling, snapping beast down and floundered backward. Regardless of dam-

aging the precious skin, he thrust the rifle barrel forward into the animal's breast and pulled the trigger.

The silent forest echoed to an explosion like that of a ten-gauge shotgun. The weapon was almost torn from Lafe's hands as the snow-filled barrel burst, tearing out breech and lock, half blinding him with flashing powder flame that spurted almost into his face.

In that bewildering second, when Lafe did not exactly realize what had happened, the trapped fisher leaped again for his throat. With a hoarse cry he dropped his useless rifle and knocked the beast down with a sweeping blow of his left arm, while his right hand groped for the small belt ax that he always carried at his side.

As the fisher leaped in again, Lafe struck at the flashing head with all his strength, aimlessly, in self-defense. The steel blade whizzed past the thrusting black muzzle, missed the sinewy shoulder by a hair, and struck full and fair upon the double jaws of the trap that dangled from the animal's imprisoned forefoot. The frosted steel shivered beneath the blow like brittle glass.

Suddenly free of the trap and the taut chain, the leaping fisher rolled over and over in the snow. Before Lafe could strike again it plunged aside out of reach. For a second it stood there, snarling and defiant, hesitating whether or not to fight it out with this mortal enemy; but when Lafe, realizing what he had done, lunged forward with a hoarse cry of rage and chagrin, the animal sprang high against the bole of a great tree, and went scrambling upward.

In desperation Lafe threw the ax, and missed again.

"Hoodooed!" he screamed in helpless rage, as he saw the dark body swinging away through the trees. "A spell on me right from the start! I'll up my traps an' back track out of here to-morrow mornin'!"



A Gentleman Lies

It was not quite a true story of Mark Sheridan's death that the stranger from Dodge City told Mark's lovely widow

By Oscar J. Friend



IN the days before the building of the railroad it wasn't feasible to haul a dead man a hundred miles across country in midwinter for burial in his family cemetery. So Mark Sheridan, owner of the Circle Dot Ranch, who had lost his head over a card game, was planted in Dodge City, and his companion, young Jed Hughes, returned home alone to break the news to the unsuspecting widow.

Jed Hughes was a hard-bitten, taci-

turn youth who had been riding range and wrangling cattle when boys of his age east of the Mississippi were still attending grade school. He was a loyal puncher, whose outstanding characteristic was his ability to see much and say little. Having two days and a hundred miles of solitude in which to meditate on the matter, as he rode across the bleak and wind-swept Panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas, he weeded out all the unnecessary harsh and brutal details of the shooting, and the account he rendered to Dorothy Sheri-

dan was a gem of brevity.

Some two or three days later another horseman rode down out of the bleak range haze which was Oklahoma, following the general trail of Jed Hughes. It was a gray day, and a northerner was brewing, when this lone rider reached the Circle Dot range. So intent was he on beating the storm to cover—for he rode without poncho or slicker—that he came upon a little tableau on the prairie almost before he was aware.

In a slight depression fringed with wintry mesquite there lay a young cow with the targetlike brand of the Circle Dot on her uppermost left hip. Beside her was a fuzzy little bundle of loose hide and long legs—her calf.

The cow was dying. She lay stretched out like a lazy dog on a summer afternoon—a telltale posture for a cow. She was too far spent even to remember the shivering bit of animal which huddled near her and moaned weakly. Unwatched, out on the range, the cow had devoured a poison weed and gasped in the throes of a great thirst. She would not desert her calf.

On the opposite edge of the little swale sat a second horseman, who was staring down at the tragedy of life and death out of hard and inscrutable gray eyes. The gusts of wind pinned the limp brim of his sombrero back against the crown, affording the first rider glimpses of a face colored like a cut of moldy ham.

The owner of the face was a heavy-set, vigorous-looking man somewhere in his forties, and his chaps, his leather coat, his greasy-brimmed hat, his scarred boots all proclaimed him a man of the range who knew hard service. There was nothing unusual in his presence here, and nothing strange in his silent contemplation of the scene; but to the other man there seemed to be an element of gloating, of triumph, in his attitude. This intangible impression, fleeting though it was, aroused the newcomer's sympathy for the help-

less animals at his feet.

The other man, who had been absorbed in his grim contemplation of the dying cow and baby calf, became aware of the presence of the stranger, and looked up sharply. His shrewd little eyes swiftly took in the details of the other's dress.

The elegant suit of heavy black broadcloth, the stiff-brimmed black Stetson, the neatly polished riding boots with their tiny ornamental spurs of silver, all cried aloud that this man was different from the usual rider of the range. Had it not been for his lean, cold face, he would have had a clerical appearance. His clothes fitted his graceful form to perfection. There was no disfiguring bulge of weapon beneath his snugly buttoned coat, but the stock of a man-size gun protruding from a holster at his right knee, and the carbine slung along his saddle, dispelled the idea that here was a representative of the church.

The man in the somberly elegant black bore up admirably under the other's scrutiny. In fact, he returned the gaze with such silent intensity that the range rider became acutely uncomfortable and felt constrained to speak.

"Hell of a note!" he growled out sullenly.

"It is," agreed the man in black. "Your stock?"

"Same thing as mine. I'm Paul Lytton, of the Three Bar, just west o' here."

"Indeed? That looks like a Circle Dot brand to me."

Lytton vouchsafed the cool speaker an ugly look.

"I got a mortgage on the Circle Dot thet's due this week. I'm goin' to have to take the ranch in for payment," he explained briefly.

"I see," nodded the other pleasantly. "What are you going to do about this?"

"Ain't but one thing to do," shrugged Lytton, as he glanced back at the faintly gasping cow.

He drew his long-barreled pistol and laid it across his raised left forearm. Squinting carefully along the sights, he shot the suffering cow through the head. His horse jumped at the sound, and he mastered the beast savagely. When he swung his smoking weapon around to draw a bead on the shivering calf, he found the stranger's body interposed.

"Look out!" he called sharply. "I'm goin' to plug the young un."

"Don't!" said the other warningly.

"Can't you see its leg is broke?" grunted the surprised rancher.

"Yes, I see," replied the man in black, as he knelt, indifferent to the muck, to examine the pitiful creature.

"Then git out o' the way. You can't do anythin' for it."

The kneeling man ignored the other's order. Careless of the damage to his immaculate garb, he shifted the crippled calf and straightened the broken leg. It was a clean break above the knee, he observed—an accident caused by the mother cow's frantic struggles. With care and the right kind of treatment, the little fellow had a chance to live; but he had to be taken to a place of warmth and shelter at once.

Using a couple of sticks for temporary splints, the good Samaritan tied up the calf's leg tightly with a cambric handkerchief from his breast pocket. While he was doing this, he was conscious of the scowling Lytton with a drawn gun at his back. At the same time he was wondering what impulse urged him to save the life of this badly handicapped calf. Was it — Dodge City? Absurd! Was it the idea of Lytton gloating over there so offensively?

Whatever his thoughts and emotions, the face he finally turned toward the grizzled ranchman was cold and expressionless as usual.

"If you're through," stated the latter heavily, "move yore carcass to one side, an' I'll finish the job."

"If you make one motion to shoot this calf," answered the other crisply, rising to his feet and snatching his six-shooter from the saddle holster on his patiently waiting horse, "I'll drill you square between the eyes!"

Lytton looked a trifle disconcerted at this dispassionate statement. He placed his hands on his saddle horn and glared.

"Who in hell are you, anyhow?" he demanded. "You ain't no preacher, for all yore Lord God suit."

"My name is William Thorne—if you care to remember it."

Mr. Lytton snorted his contempt.

"Since you're so set on savin' thet calf, how you figurin' on gettin' him to the Circle Dot 'thout a wagon or a buckboard?"

For answer Thorne unsaddled his horse. Spreading out the saddle blanket, he tenderly wrapped the shivering calf in it, and lashed the little bundle securely across the back of his mount. Without another word to the watching Lytton or a single backward glance, he flung his heavy saddle over one shoulder, took his guns and bridle reins in the other hand, and set out across the range afoot.

Lytton sat his horse and stared after the trudging man until the latter was out of sight.

"Of all the cockeyed, locoed mavericks thet ever strayed across this range thet *hombre* wins the barb wire suspenders!" he soliloquized to the dead cow. "Well, if he saves the calf, it 'll just mean one more for me!"

Glancing up at the lowering sky, he set spurs to his horse and rode toward the Three Bar Ranch.

II

THORNE reached the ranch house of the Circle Dot on the first outburst of the storm. He was reeling slightly under the weight he carried, but he fought his way against the gusts of raw wind and rain along the corral to the lee of the feeding shed before he

dropped his burdens. Then he relaxed with a sigh of relief, and leaned against the barn for a minute.

He heard the sounds and voices of two or three men as they worked at some task within the building. Through the driving sheets of rain he made out the outlines of the ranch house itself some fifty yards away, and, nearer, the looming bulk of the comfortable-looking bunk house. It wasn't a bad-looking ranch, but it needed the attention of an interested owner.

He straightened erect, turned toward the barn door, and found himself confronted by the grim face of Jed Hughes. The two men eyed each other silently for a long moment under the eaves, while the icy rain swirled by.

There was no hint of welcome in the young puncher's stony gaze. Thorne expected none, but he smiled a thin little smile.

"What you doin' in this country?" demanded Hughes curtly.

"I bring a message to Mrs. Sheridan from her husband."

"Mark Sheridan's dead, an' you damn well know it!" said the young man harshly.

"Nevertheless, I bring word from him," insisted Thorne. "There are my guns on the ground with my saddle. Can you get them in out of the wet and care for my horse? I picked up a new bit of Circle Dot property that needs quick attention."

"What?"

"A baby calf with a broken leg," panted Thorne, as he lifted the bundle from his horse.

Then, and then only, did the other move to assist.

"Take 'im to the kitchen of the ranch house," he directed briefly, picking up the saddle and weapons. "Here—this way."

In a moment Thorne stood, dripping, in the presence of the widow of Mark Sheridan. He looked at her in amazement, almost catching his breath in admiration. She was not the coars-

ened, red-faced, big-knuckled range woman he had expected to find. Instead, she was a vision of delicate coloring and sweet beauty. Her face had the purity of a cameo, her high-piled hair the sheen of a raven's wing. She could hardly have been thirty years of age; and above all she manifestly had culture—refinement. She was a lady!

For the first time in many years William Thorne felt rough and uncouth in his surroundings. The presence of Dorothy Sheridan transformed this dingy ranch kitchen into a stately drawing-room. The rawboned woman moving about and making the first motions toward preparing supper became a lady in waiting. The slender and hard-faced Jed Hughes became an equerry to the queen. How on earth had the blustering, bullying, hard-drinking Sheridan managed to marry a woman like this?

"This man's name is Thorne," announced Jed tersely, coming to the point with admirable bluntness. "He's brung in a hurt Circle Dot calf."

Dorothy Sheridan's violet eyes filled with quick sympathy. She wasted no time in questions, but hurried to prepare a bed for the little animal behind the roaring wood stove. The laconic Jed, with a significant glance at Thorne, dumped the saddle and guns in the corner and took himself off to see after the traveler's horse.

Thorne placed the feebly moaning calf on its bed and swiftly removed his coat and hat. Rolling up the white cuffs from his supple wrists, he turned to the mistress of the ranch.

"I don't suppose you have any plaster of Paris here, madam?"

"No," she answered in a sweet voice, glancing up in surprise at his own clear and cultured accent. "I'm sorry. Will anything else do?"

"I think I can manage with wooden splints for the broken leg," he said. "Would you please see that I have plenty of hot water and cloths for bandages?"

He glanced at the serving woman; but it was with her own hands that Dorothy Sheridan supplied his needs. Side by side she labored with him to save the life of the little orphan. It was she who knelt and sponged the cold little muzzle and cleansed the big, watery eyes. It was her deft hand that instantly handed him articles before he could ask for them. Despite the obvious fact that she was a gently nurtured woman, she knew things.

The saving of that little life was no simple matter, and all the rest of the stormy afternoon Thorne worked desperately on the calf. The broken leg he set as neatly as any surgeon could have done. He cleansed the rough coat, massaged it, oiled it, applied hot packs, and coaxed the suffering little fellow to suck whisky-laced warm milk from his fingers. It had become a symbolic thing to him. He must save the life of this calf!

Jed Hughes came in several times with wood for the stove and for the big fireplace in the living room, or with water for the kitchen, or with a brimming bucket of milk from the dairy cow. He never spoke, but cast a critical eye on the work of resuscitation as he passed.

As night fell, the rain turned into sleet and the wind grew sharper and higher. The housekeeper lighted the lamps and put the finishing touches to the evening meal by placing two pans of biscuits in the oven.

Finally the calf grew stronger and responded to treatment. Dorothy Sheridan relaxed and smiled for the first time when Thorne succeeded in getting a pint of warm milk into its stomach by the subterfuge of leaving two fingers in the animal's mouth to be sucked, and gently lowering its wobbly head into a bowl of the liquid. This marked the turning point.

Jed Hughes came in, stamping his feet, and surveyed the result with an unrelenting eye.

"Goin' to freeze to-night," he an-

nounced curtly. "Supper 'bout ready, Miz Braggs?"

The housekeeper nodded.

"Call Tom and Ben, please, Jed," said Mrs. Sheridan. "Have you taken care of everything?"

"Yes'm," he answered humbly, as he swung on his heel.

They all ate together as one family. After supper the two punchers, Tom and Ben, withdrew to the bunk house, and the housekeeper, having prepared the guest chamber for Thorne, retired silently to her room. Only Jed Hughes remained grimly seated before the ruddy fire in the living room. He said nothing, but he fastened his eyes on Thorne expressively.

The latter understood that the time had come for stating his business. He studied the wistful face of Dorothy Sheridan for a long space.

"If you feel strong enough, Mrs. Sheridan, to hear anything further from—from Dodge City, I have a message from—your husband," he said at length.

In the flickering firelight he could see her form go rigid for an instant, and her slender fingers clenched themselves. After a pause, however, the face she turned toward him was calm and placid. Jed Hughes remained a silent and implacable witness.

"Yes?" she answered steadily.

"The circumstances are of such a nature," began Thorne carefully, "that you must pardon a total stranger for speaking of your private affairs. Can you allow that?"

"I can, sir," she said, faintly puzzled.

"Your husband died in—my room," went on Thorne slowly. "He intrusted me with a mission to perform, and with a message for you. The mission is this—Paul Lytton, of the Three Bar Ranch, holds a first mortgage for twenty-seven hundred dollars against this place, and it comes due on Friday. That was your husband's business in Dodge City—to raise money to meet

the mortgage. To be brief, he did so—before his accident; and he intrusted me with the money to come here and pay off Lytton. His message was that he begged your forgiveness for the—er—the sort of life he said he led you, and he hoped this last action of his in clearing the ranch for you would serve to soften your memory of him. That, I believe, is about all.”

The woman turned from the speaker to the silent Jed Hughes with a questioning face.

“You—you did not tell me any of this, Jed!” she accused.

“Jed didn’t know it,” interposed Thorne. “I was alone with Sheridan while Jed went for a doctor.”

The woman continued to face the young puncher expectantly.

“Yep,” finally articulated the latter, fastening his burning gaze on the inscrutable face of Thorne. “Yep, that’s true.”

III

THE storm lasted two days, ending up with snow and a nasty freeze. During this period Thorne remained as a guest at the Circle Dot Ranch, under the hard eyes of the tight-lipped Jed Hughes. He did not in the least resent the attitude of the unyielding puncher. He passed his time in watching the recovery of the calf and in conversation with Dorothy Sheridan.

He learned that this little ranch constituted her all, that the herd had not prospered, that three men were hardly adequate to care for the stock, and that she had not the wherewith to hire more punchers. He found that she knew little of the business details of handling range land, but that she intended to keep on, because she had nowhere else to go. Piecing together little things that she said, he learned that her life with Sheridan had not been happy. He also learned that Jed Hughes loved her dumbly and blindly and was her faithful watchdog.

Of himself he said little. He re-

galed her with stories of the outside world—the world of great events, the world of music and literature. Although the shadow of his profession marked them apart, he found in her a kindred spirit for appreciation of the finer things of life; and before Paul Lytton came to collect his mortgage, Thorne, too, worshiped her from afar.

It was on the fourth day, on the heels of a sloppy thaw, that the Three Bar rancher rode over to look after his interests. The moldy cut of ham had a two-day growth of whiskers, indicating further decomposition, but the hard gray eyes showed no deterioration of their shrewdness and cunning. He was admitted by Jed Hughes, and tramped his ugly way into the living room, leaving mud stains and fragments of dirty snow cakes in his wake. He was a disturbing breath from the stables.

Dorothy Sheridan was sitting near the large side window behind a table. Thorne was seated on the opposite side of the fireplace, coatless, but still very much the gentleman, as he cleaned and polished his guns. Jed followed the visitor into the room and silently proceeded to throw a heavy log or two upon the fire, in a manner which suggested that he might have found pleasure in doing the same with Lytton.

The visitor stopped short at sight of Thorne, and then grunted an unintelligible greeting in response to that gentleman’s grave salutation. He advanced with a possessive air, declining the chair offered by the woman, and spread out his powerful, dirt-begrimed hands to the blaze.

“Mornin’, Miz Sheridan,” he said, simulating a hearty cordiality. “Nasty weather, eh? I see the stranger got in with the calf all right. You save it, Thorne?”

Mrs. Sheridan and Hughes looked at Thorne in surprise. This was the first intimation they had had that Lytton was present at the rescue of the calf.

"I think so," replied Thorne calmly. "Mr. Lytton put the poor cow out of her misery," he explained briefly to the others, making no reference to the passage at arms out on the range.

"Sure was too bad about the unexpectedness of Mark's death," went on Lytton, rubbing his horny paws so briskly that the rasping noise sounded all over the chamber. "Kind o' left you up in the air, as the feller says. I sure hate to pester you any so soon, Miz Sheridan, but I come over to learn if you've made any arrangements."

"In just what way do you mean, Mr. Lytton?" Dorothy Sheridan inquired. "Do you refer to the mort—"

"I mean about yore business plans," interrupted Lytton hastily. "I was wonderin' how well off Mark left you. What you goin' to do about runnin' this place? You ain't the sort to be wrestlin' with a ranch. An' then there's thet little matter—ahem! This is a sort of a private conversation," he commented pointedly, glowering at the calmly polishing Thorne and the silent Jed.

Neither man made a move to leave the room. In the uncomfortable silence Mr. Lytton cleared his throat and rasped his hands together once more. He glared at the silent woman, and then shrugged. Turning his broad back to the fire, he spread out his legs and settled on them masterfully. In spite of himself, an air of triumph and gloating oozed from him so strongly that Thorne snapped his Winchester together with a sharp metallic clang that made the Three Bar man jump slightly and frown.

"You may speak freely before these two gentlemen," the woman said quietly. "Come to the object of your visit, please."

"All right," grunted Lytton, his hard eyes playing over her lissom figure joyously. "There's the little matter of thet mortgage, since you've mentioned it. It's due to-day. I reckon you can't meet it; but there's a

way to handle a thing like thet. I'm a widower myself. Course, I ain't suggestin' anythin' suddenlike, you understand, but—"

Thorne's chill voice cut through his heavy speech like a knife.

"Have you brought the papers with you?"

Lytton jerked about angrily.

"What business is it of yours?" he flung out uglily.

Jed Hughes stood like a pillar of granite as Thorne slowly got to his feet and sauntered up to the coarse figure before the fireplace, a thin smile upon his lips.

"Just this," he said crisply and tersely. "Mark Sheridan sent home the money to pay that mortgage before he died—twenty-seven hundred dollars principal, and two hundred and seventy dollars interest for the past year, making a total of twenty-nine hundred and seventy dollars. Get out your papers! Jed, bring the bag out of my saddle roll, will you?"

The silent Jed complied. Lytton stared into Thorne's mocking face for a long instant, his own features twisting in an angry snarl. Then he turned upon the seated woman. Before he could speak a word Thorne whirled him back, so that they were face to face. He spoke in low, vibrant tones that had the crackle of a whip—a whip which the curlike ears of Lytton heard and obeyed.

"Get out your mortgage papers without another word!" he grated. "I know that you had set your black heart on this woman. I know that you skinned Sheridan in every deal you had with him. I don't doubt that you made him the gambler and drinker he was. Don't you speak to this lady! Don't you dare put into words the foul bargain you are thinking of! Give me that mortgage and a receipt for this money, and get out! Understand? Get out, and never come back! If you show your ugly, evil, decomposing face on this ranch again, Jed Hughes will blow

it off your shoulders for you; and he ought to get a bounty for your pelt!"

The business was transacted more swiftly than any mortgage payment ever made before. Baffled, choked up with rage and hate, Lytton rammed his greenbacks into his leathern jacket and strode heavily to the door. Here he hesitated and then swung around for a parting shot. He shook his hairy fist at the stern figure in the elegant black trousers and fancy waistcoat.

"Damn yore soul!" he snarled. "I got you figgered out at last. You're a gambler from Dodge City. I'll bet a thousand dollars you're the man who shot Mark Sheridan!"

William Thorne's usually pale face went dead white. He quivered as if he had been cut by a keen lash. Then, hatless and coatless, he started after Lytton at a swift stride.

The other read annihilation in his assailant's blazing eyes, and, with a little yelp of consternation, turned to flee. Thorne pursued him out of the house and caught him before he reached his horse.

Grasping the bulky Lytton by the collar and the seat of the trousers, with a herculean effort he lifted the man from his feet and deposited him in the icy water of the horse trough. The exertion made Thorne slip and fall to one hand and one knee in the mud and slush, but he was on his feet instantly and returning to the house without a backward glance.

IV

IN the living room, Dorothy Sheridan stood with her hands at her throat, her lovely eyes fixed in horrified fascination on the grim countenance of Jed Hughes; but Jed was staring out the window at the foot race.

"Jed!" she whispered. "Jed! You heard what Lytton said. You saw how Mr. Thorne acted. Is there—is there any truth in it?"

"Look there!" said Jed, chuckling as he pointed to the scene of immersion

at the watering trough. "By Gawd, there's a man!"

"Jed!" she almost hissed, clutching at the puncher's arm and shaking him frantically. "Answer me!"

The young fellow met her anxious eyes squarely.

"Yes'm," he clipped out tersely. "Yes'm, it's true. Mark had been drinkin', an' he cheated in the game. Thorne caught him at it, an' Mark drawed first—that's all."

She recoiled at the hammer blows of this frank speech.

"Then the rest of it was all a lie? Thorne lied to me about Mark dying in his room? About sending me a message? About the money?"

"He must have," agreed Jed somberly. "I know Mark had his last red cent in that jack pot he tried to steal."

The entrance of Thorne interrupted the conversation. A swift glance was enough to tell the gambler, however, that Jed Hughes had unlocked his lips. His dark eyes filled with pain as he looked at the woman and she avoided his gaze. With bowed head he approached his chair and began putting on his coat.

"I guess I've finished my job," he observed aloud. "Get my horse for me, will you, Jed?"

Without speaking, the young puncher left the room. In a silence that was broken only by the crackling flames Thorne assembled and loaded his two guns. He did not look at Dorothy Sheridan again.

She was the first to speak.

"That money—for the mortgage," she faltered. "You—I can't accept it," she choked.

He did not answer.

"Oh, I know all about it!" she went on bitterly. "Jed has admitted that my husband was caught cheating, and that he died penniless. I know that all you've told me has been lies!"

He winced at this, and she hurried on.

"Look at me!" she cried. "Why

don't you look at me in my shame and helplessness? Why don't you mock me?"

White to the lips, the man slowly approached and laid his six-shooter on the table beside her.

"Madam," he said with difficulty, "you are not helpless. There is my gun, the weapon that killed your husband. Before God, I swear that I would sooner die than be the cause of one minute's sorrow and anguish for you; but I didn't know until it was too late. There is my gun. If I deserve to die, shoot me!"

She burst into tears.

"You know I don't want to shoot you," she sobbed; "but why did you lie to me? It would have been kinder to tell the plain, ugly truth."

"It wasn't all a lie," he answered, as he slowly picked up his gun. "Mark Sheridan did die in my room, begging you for forgiveness. He had cheated as a last desperate attempt to get the money to meet Lytton's note. He earned that money for you."

The sound of hoofs outside summoned to the man.

"At least let me bid you good-by," he said.

She did not respond. She bit her

nether lip cruelly and sank into the chair at the table. The offending mortgage she twisted convulsively between her slender fingers.

"Don't overlook having Jed register that payment at the county seat," he admonished. "Good-by!"

She did not even look at him, and he walked out of the house. As Jed Hughes handed him the bridle reins, the puncher held out his hand.

"You're all white, pardner," he said huskily.

"Thanks," was the gambler's brief response.

They shook hands warmly.

Thorne shoved his rifle and his six-shooter into their respective holsters and swung himself into the saddle. He permitted himself one last glance at the house before heading northward into the blue haze out of which he had come.

What he saw made his eyes widen in surprise. The woman stood in the doorway, a lovely picture despite her reddened eyes and tumbling hair. She waved her hand somewhat diffidently in farewell.

"You'll come back?" she called after him. "You'll come back—to see how the calf gets along?"



TRAVELERS

TRAVELERS two are we who down the years
Have voyaged far together—growing old.

Although the summer's heat and winter's cold
Have often come and gone, through hope that cheers
And hurt that stabs the heart with icy fears
Our love has grown, and as a story told,
As clouds that part at sunset and unfold
A vision, so the plan divine appears.

And you are young—still young to me—and fair
As when we met so many years ago;
I do not mark one gray strand in your hair,
One line to mar the face I knew—and know.

Naught has Time stolen from us for we share
Each joy and sorrow while our blessings grow.

F. L. Montgomery



"Come in to the room,
parson; you will
see something
wonderful"

Bob Davis Recalls

*The most pathetic story he ever heard from
human lips*

By Bob Davis

THIS story came to me from a minister of the gospel. For some time I have pondered as to how it should be written, just how much should be disclosed — or whether it should be written at all. In the contemplation of these details the significance of the narrative has been borne in upon me to such an extent that I feel it obligatory to set it down in

cold type, to reproduce the tale, as nearly as possible, in the same form that it came to me from the narrator. The whole tragic monologue, as it fell upon my ears, follows in full:

A few years ago—said the minister—before the people of this country became wrought up over the question of prohibition, I was conducting in a Southern State a small parish among

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the lowly folk of a sparsely settled district, where I came in contact with much distress born of poverty and ignorance. Some of my parishioners manufactured and sold moonshine or made it for their own use. That illicit enterprise had been going on for a century, with all its unhappy consequences, and was not within my control. It was there to stay; part of the problem of life.

One night, very late, I was summoned from my bed by a knock at my front door. It was too dark for me to distinguish the visitor, so I asked him in. He was probably sixty years of age, ill kempt, furtive and with a haunting fear in his face.

"I am in trouble," he said, "and I need help, the kind that only a man of God can give. Will you come with me to my house up in the laurel? I've a horse and a rig outside. You'll have to take my word for it that something serious has happened." His speech was that of an educated man.

I dressed hurriedly and drove off with him into the dark forest. While he was not actually intoxicated he exuded a vapor of alcohol that was stifling. He was disinclined to give me particulars concerning the mission. "I want you to see for yourself," was his response to my queries. At intervals he moaned like a sick animal and pleaded continually with the horse to get along. After half an hour of lurching over a bad country road we turned into a hidden course and halted in front of a miserable shack that nestled against the mountainside like some sleeping animal. A single candle burned on a table.

"Have you brought the minister?" The voice was unmistakably feminine, but thick and maudlin. Two boys, about fourteen and fifteen, appeared in the doorway. They were garbed in tattered blue denim and the dull leer of the drinker was in their eyes. The elder of the pair picked up the candle as I entered on the heels of the father

and held it aloft. It was as though some stage director had lighted up one of Gorky's terrible dramas of delirium. The place was filthy, and the cast of four reeked with the stale effluvium of moonshine.

The incongruity of the scene lay in the fact that all four of them were smiling, as though with false gayety. Even the father, steeped in remorse while we drove through the timber, had become mildly buoyant. I turned to him for an explanation. "Come into the bedroom, parson," said he, taking the candle from his son, and leading the way. "You will see something wonderful." With the others I stepped into the adjoining room.

Stretched upon a low pallet was the lifeless body of a young woman not more than twenty years of age. A mass of brown hair rolled up from the white forehead and fell back on the stained pillow. Her shapely hands were crossed on her breast and the exquisite profile lighted from above was the acme of angelic beauty. It was the most radiant face I have ever beheld. Like a calla lily in the marl or a lotus blossom in the slime the girl had come to the fruition of her beauty and her bloom.

Daughter and sister in that maudlin company grouped about her bier. She had died of pneumonia that evening and her body was placed where it lay. Not a tear had been shed, not a syllable of remorse uttered. About her exquisite clay the living moved and gave no sign of grief. The father and mother looked at each other with mutual approval. The tousled brothers shared the general satisfaction. Would I perform the burial service? Yes; tomorrow. I would bring the coroner, arrange the usual formalities, and then lay her in the earth. Their tearless joy baffled me. Well past midnight I departed from that house of mystery and walked back to my parsonage in the imponderable dark, wondering what the solution could be.

The next morning I attended to the official duties, and at noon, with no witnesses save the family, performed the burial services in a laurel grove. During the whole thirty years of my ministering no other interment compared with that amazing ritual on the hillside. The boys had slicked their hair, and from somewhere secured clothing not all of rags. They stood at the grave dug by their own hands and viewed the ceremony like strangers to the dead. The father, lifted for the moment from the despond into which he had been drifting for half of his existence, displayed a certain pride and satisfaction at the culmination of his efforts to secure a Christian burial. Beside him, complacently smiling, stood the woman who had borne the girl. But for the thud of clay and the last words of the service one would have thought that the cornerstone of a homestead was being laid.

I returned with the family to the

house. On the kitchen table was a bucket containing enough moonshine to float a dipper. Both of the boys took a drink and passed the ladle to the mother, who took two short drinks and handed it on to the father. Just as he was about to lift it to his lips I asked him why the family was so apparently joyful. He finished his draft of moonshine and then replied:

"The girl you just buried never wet her lips with alcohol. She was as fine a creature as ever drew the breath of life. She grew up in an atmosphere of awful thirst; she had nothing to live for, nothing to look forward to. But she had a great spirit in her, a spirit that all her forbears lacked. We failed her, but she remained with us. You ask why we are not mourning her death, why there is no grief in the house. I'll tell you. She has escaped. She was the first member of my family to die during the last sixty years who does not sleep in a drunkard's grave."



DARKNESS

I HAVE seen sun at dawn,
And sharp, clear starry skies.
The depth of cool, green pines
Has soothed my eyes.

I have seen purple waves
Topple to rainbow spray,
And stern, red banks of cloud
Edge dying day.

So, close the swinging doors,
Shutter the waning light.
Eyes of my memory
Shall give me sight.

Edith Loomis

THE NIGHT CAME ON

AND so the night came on, and with the night the moon,
Like a caravel of gold on a vast deep blue lagoon,
Rose over the mountain peak to the sound of the cricket's croon.

And the river lift edits voice, saluting the barque of gold,
And the tree-crests waved their hands while a wave of glamour rolled
Over the meadow lands fold upon molten fold.

Under the cedarn boughs the violet shades grew deep;
Up from the aftermath cool attars began to creep;
And so the night came on, bearing the boon of sleep.

Clinton Scollard

The Prophet



Over his daughter's
shoulder Lomax
saw her face
appear

*Has the
reader ever
thought how
terrible it would
be if men and women
could foresee the future?*

By John Steuart Erskine



HE doctor slipped off his overcoat and halted for a moment in front of the mirror to pat his hair and his collar, so that his professional appearance might seem in no way ruffled. A step sounded on the stairs, and, turning, he saw the wife of his patient coming down to meet him.

"Good morning, Mrs. Lomax," he greeted her. "How is our patient this morning?"

Even now, when he meant to be hearty, the bedside manner that was his greatest asset kept creeping into his voice—the sympathy that made it pleasant to be ill, the encouragement that made cure seem possible.

Mrs. Lomax was a tall, strongly

built woman with hazel eyes, brown hair touched with gray in front, and a face serene and self-contained. She was still in early middle age, but she dressed herself in the taste of a day long past, as do those who have put their youth behind them. Her carriage was dignified and her voice was pleasant and precise, giving not a hint of her feelings.

"He has been sleeping most of the time," she said quietly. "When I saw him early, he was quite lucid, but a little later he became delirious again. He talked wildly, and was afraid of having the nurse near him because she had some disease."

"Yes, yes," agreed the doctor sympathetically. "Sleep is the important thing. These shadows will pass when

he gets strong again. May I go up?"

Mrs. Lomax led the way up the carpeted stairs and tapped at the door of a room on the second floor. Feet moved softly within, and the door was opened a little way by a short, fat nurse with a pleasant and intelligent face under her white cap. At sight of the doctor she nodded and smiled, picked up some papers from a table, and tiptoed out, closing the door behind her.

They went through the charts together, conversing in undertones.

"I'm afraid we shall have to wake him," said the doctor cheerfully.

He pushed open the door and went in, followed by the nurse and Mrs. Lomax.

Jerome Lomax lay asleep. His body was a long, thin mound under the eider down. His gaunt, thoughtful face, outlined in profile, seemed yellow-brown against the white pillow. His dreamy forehead rose and swept backward until it met and melted into his retreating hair. His nose was high and hooked, but not fine; his pale lips were parted, showing a few irregular, discolored teeth; his chin was small and weak. One thin hand lay brown on the green eider down—the sensitive, supple hand of an artist, its knuckles already knotted with the advance of years.

At the sound of the closing door, the sick man's eyes opened and stared blankly at the three figures that approached the bed. His gaze fixed itself upon the nurse with a gleam of recognition, and his countenance became contorted with fear.

"Keep back," the doctor whispered warningly, and the nurse turned away.

Lomax's face relaxed. His eyes passed indifferently over his wife and dwelt on the doctor's face.

"How are we this morning?" asked the doctor cheerfully, sitting down at the bedside and touching Lomax's pulse.

The patient made no reply. His eyes were still searching the other

man's face intently.

"You are the doctor?" he said suddenly, as if coming at last to a conclusion. "Can't you do something for that poor woman?" he whispered earnestly, indicating the nurse with his eyes.

"What's wrong with her?" asked the doctor, humoring the patient and continuing his examination.

"I don't know," said Lomax uncertainly; "but she's very ill. I'm sure she's going to die."

There was terrible pity in his eyes. The doctor, watching and not understanding, saw the swirl of hidden emotions passing over the sick man's spirit. He felt as puzzled as some philosophic fish observing the scurry of squalls and the shadows of invisible birds flashing over the silver ceiling of his world.

II

JEROME LOMAX slept. Day and night he slept, making only now and then a brief excursion into consciousness, as a seal rises to the surface of the sea, pokes out his head and dives again. Gradually, as he gathered his lost strength in the restful depths of sleep, his moments of consciousness became more continuous and lucid and his sense of the reality of life increased. Even now, however, he viewed life from the standpoint of one dead or not yet born, for it is difficult to abandon hope and life in the throes of suffering and to rise again unchanged.

He saw phantoms moving about his bedside. He felt the touch of hands, now as vague as the soft pressure of bedclothes, now agonizing like the touch of a knife point on a bared nerve. He heard the murmur of voices, and watched the light rise and fall, rise and fall, with the rapid successions of day and night.

After a time his impressions became more vivid. He felt his mouth get dry, the pressure of a strong arm under his shoulders, and the soothing wetness of a drink. His brain, abandoned in the

raging agony of death, was as stiff as if calcified. Often new impressions were accompanied by a terrible twinge, like the sounding of a shrill note of pain through all his nerves; but on the instant the pang was gone, for his memory was dormant, allowing pain no continuity, and therefore no reality.

His world now began to shape itself into green walls. The patches of light on his left hand squared themselves into windows. The people around him sorted themselves into the nurse, who was always there, the doctor in his long coat, and other women of varying shape, color, and size.

Like a baby he stared at the puzzling, shadowy forms, picturing them gradually as chairs, chests of drawers, curtains; and he twitched the stiff muscle of his memory for words to express these ideas.

"Window," he muttered, and the nurse came toward the bed interestedly.

"Close the window."

It was closed, but he was interested only in the sound of meaningless words.

"Do not lean out of the window," he groped on. "*Ne penchez pas dehors. Nicht hinauslehnen.* The pier, Margate—Southern Railway."

With the effort he relapsed into sleep.

He noticed a curious change in the nurse. In the daytime she was short, broad, and dark haired; in the night she was taller, and her hair was white. With difficulty he realized that she was two nurses; but for some time the idea of her singularity confused him, and he watched her closely.

Then, like an aura around each, he distinguished the personality that differentiated her. The white-haired nurse was inalterable. Her face was expressionless, but she radiated an atmosphere of pain, as if she had spent her life beside sick beds, attending practically to physical needs, but sharing not at all in the agony under her hands. Sometimes she seemed young,

sometimes very old, but never different.

On the other hand, the day nurse was always changing. Her face was never unfeeling, but alternated in the extremes of joy and pain. Sometimes she was a happy, plump girl with bright, brown hair and gray eyes. Then her face fattened and paled, her mouth twisted with horrible suffering, and her eyes glinted with fever. She was as vague as if in a mist. Then the mist dissolved, and she was moving to the bedside with half a glass of milk to fill at the siphon on the table.

Lomax shrank from her in terror, unable to move the leaden weight of his frail body, but horrified at the nearness of this woman about to die. Words rushed from him—ejaculations of fear, phrases from a terrible story read long ago, fragments of the prayers for the dead, anything that tumbled out of the untidy rubbish heap of his mind. Again he fell asleep.

Soon, among the women who entered his room, he distinguished two taller than the others. One, slender, young, affectionate, was probably his daughter. The other was his wife, but to her he paid little attention, for she seemed to him a horrible woman. He even muttered as much aloud, when she came to his bedside and asked him stiff questions about his feelings, much as an awkward grown-up might catechize a friend's child. Her face was unfeeling and complacent, with eyes that sought her own interest and an obstinate mouth that held to her own way.

She, too, wavered and changed. Sometimes he saw her as an intelligent, serious girl, a clergyman's daughter, just the sort to turn the head of an introspective, temperamental young artist who had tested his own solution of life's problems and had found the dregs of pleasure bitter in his mouth. He saw her grow older, he saw babies in her arms, he saw her face verge on unhappiness, as if in husband and children she had failed to find rest for her

soul, and he saw her emptiness give way at length to self-sufficiency and hardness.

It seemed utterly unreal to him that this woman should be his wife. She was so old, so complete, while to him life might again be a bright flame of desire unfulfilled. It would have been far more natural if the younger woman had been his wife—she who was only his daughter.

The doctor, too, ceased to be a black coat and became a personality. Lomax looked at him with pitying interest, feeling intensely sorry for this man whose ideals lay so far behind him. He had never had great intelligence, but he had had great hopes and great sincerity, all to no purpose. His brain had never led him to the wonderful discoveries of which he had once dreamed so unselfishly; so at first he had dashed wildly after each new fad, in the hope that it might be a truth that he could serve. Then he had learned that it is easier to scare away patients than to collect them, and he had put aside his dream of greatness and settled down to making money.

A wife hung about his neck—a stupid, nervous creature twenty years younger than himself, vain to the edge of madness. His face grew old and gray with the worry and misery that she caused him as she fluttered about masculine lamps of attraction, singeing her silly wings and lamenting the pain. Then he died quite suddenly, in a fit of noiseless coughing, his hair iron-gray against the pillow, his high-bridged nose white, his gaunt cheek bones yellow.

Lomax started, for the doctor, leaning over him was not dead. Indeed, he was but in early middle age, with a face peaceful if not exuberant. Lomax realized that these calamities had not yet hunted him down, and he felt horrified at the thought of the disaster that hung over over the poor man's head. He clutched at his arm.

"Doctor," he begged earnestly,

"don't do it! It means misery for you if you do."

The doctor's eyebrows quivered, for this was a new glimpse of the state of mind that the nurse had described to him.

"Do what?" he asked, smiling kindly.

"Marry," Lomax explained, still clinging to his wrist. Mrs. Lomax flushed; the nurse looked hastily out of the window, smothering a smile. "She's much too young for you, and she'll make you frightfully unhappy. Don't marry, doctor!"

"My dear fellow," replied the doctor with a forced laugh, "I am married already."

"Oh, my God!" said Lomax, and he lay back on the pillow, panting and whimpering in feeble fear.

These brief hours of consciousness became to the sick man an agony that he had no power to resist. He himself lay firm in bed, gripping changeless security with his hands; but beyond the edge of the coverlet all was confusion, and those he loved were wandering along the crumbling lips of a cliff, where abysses of disaster reached out for their blind feet. He alone could see; yet, when he warned, no one understood.

His suffering was terrible, and he tried to close his eyes that he might not see the horrors of fate; but fear and curiosity hypnotized him so that he could not fail to look, and day by day the awful clarity of his mind increased.

III

A HAND thumped on the door, and then, as if by afterthought, tapped softly. The nurse opened it, and a tall youth put his head in. They whispered, with sidelong movements of their eyes toward the patient. The boy entered, his sister close behind him, and together they tiptoed to the bed, where Lomax lay awake.

"How are you, father?" the boy

asked uncomfortably, looking down into the steady eyes that watched him so sadly.

He was afraid of this parent, for Lomax, who was usually jealous and irritable with his own sex, had bullied his son in an attempt to correct his mother's spoiling. The result had been disastrous. The boy had become dependent upon his mother's sympathy, had early learned to seek comfort from women, and to fear the rough contacts of men. If his sister had not been spoiled in the opposite direction, it was because her nature was too generous to allow it.

"Is that you, Jim?" Jerome Lomax asked feebly. "When did you die?"

The boy glanced wildly about for help, and found none.

"I'm not dead," he protested. "I'm just down from Cambridge to see how you're getting on."

Lomax wrinkled up his eyes uncomprehendingly. All around him sounded the dull roar of explosions, shaking the ground under his bed. There was a faint breeze, but a smell in the air seemed to catch his throat and tear the breath out of his lungs. Machine guns hammered and rifles cracked; and before him stood Jim, his only son, with three wounds in his breast, blood trickling from the corner of his mouth, and death in his face.

Then the breeze puffed stronger, and everything was gone, except Jim standing there, strong, young, and untrustworthy, troubled by his father's stare. Lomax, who had loved his son but little, felt a horror at the thought of losing him.

"Jim," he pleaded, "stay here with us. You'll be killed, boy—can't you see?"

Jim clasped the frail, clutching hand.

"Of course I'll stay as long as I can," he agreed placatingly. "Don't get excited. Nothing's going to happen to me."

Lomax's face quivered, and he gripped his son the tighter. Jim

glanced hopelessly over his shoulder at his sister, who came forward and intervened, disentangling the clutching fingers.

"Don't worry, daddy," she begged. "Try not to worry until you get stronger. We're going to have warm weather very soon, and then you'll get well quite quickly. Do you see how the trees are getting green?"

But Lomax paid no heed. He was staring into her face and clutching hopefully at the fragments of misery that lay before her also. Encouragingly she smiled at him, but he would not be cheered.

"Never mind, daddy," she said happily. "It's awfully good to be alive and see the spring coming on!"

"You haven't married him yet?" Lomax whispered fearfully.

She looked surprised.

"No," she replied softly. "Charley comes back from India this summer."

"Don't!" he begged, gripping her arm with the thin tentacles of his fingers. "He drinks too much. You'll be awfully unhappy sometimes!"

She shivered a little, but smiled still.

"Don't fret, daddy dear," she said, squeezing his hand gently. "I'm willing to be unhappy sometimes, but I must marry Charley."

The nurse came forward and touched their arms.

"He's talked enough," she whispered. "Come away."

Over his daughter's shoulder Lomax saw her face appear—that face with the drawn mouth and tortured, feverish eyes, that kind face now become hideous with approaching death. Making an effort to sit up, he shrieked a warning at his beloved daughter, in a voice that was a shrill whistle.

"Don't let her touch you, child!" he squeaked. "You'll die, too, if you catch it!"

They all stood still in surprise, close to one another as before. Frantically the sick man tried to lift himself and reach them, to put his own worthless

body in between his daughter and the danger she could not see.

"Quiet him," whispered the nurse. "He's afraid of me."

The girl leaned over her father, pushed him gently back to the pillow, and kissed his gaunt cheek. He sobbed feebly, tearlessly, his jaw trembling.

"Go to sleep, daddy," she crooned, stroking his forehead. "Don't think any more—only sleep."

His eyes closed wearily.

Outside the door Jim turned angrily to his sister.

"He's as mad as a hatter," the boy protested. "He ought to be locked up."

When next the doctor came, the nurse convinced him that the patient would make better progress if attended to by some one else.

IV

A WEEK later Mrs. Lomax met the doctor in the hall on his arrival, and led him to the sitting room, where the family was in committee. As she opened the door, Jim's voice reached them clearly:

"Well, in my opinion the old boy's creamy in the crumpet."

Mrs. Lomax glanced behind her uneasily, to see that the maid had left the hall. Then she closed the door and came forward. Jim waved the doctor toward a chair and leaned against the mantelpiece, regarding the assembly with a superciliously paternal air.

"We wanted to speak to you today, doctor," Mrs. Lomax explained, "because Jim goes back to Cambridge to-morrow; and as he's the head of the family, now that his poor father is—*non compos*—well, we thought we'd like to hear your opinion."

"The fact is," Jim elaborated, "in my opinion the old boy's gone—"

"Jim!" interrupted his mother in mild reproof. "That's not respectful to your father."

"Well, it's so," he persisted, waving one foot over the unlighted grate. "We

can't go into his room without his shouting prophecies of battle, murder, and sudden death at all of us. He's chased away that jolly nurse he had, and this one's beginning to get the wind up. If this is a cheerful sort of home for a fellow to come back to, I prefer a mausoleum!"

"Dry up, Jim!" said his sister hotly. "What does it matter to you, anyway? All that troubles you is that you can't have so much attention when you're at home."

The doctor made a helpless gesture.

"What is it you want *my* opinion about, Mrs. Lomax?" he asked.

She suppressed her daughter with a reproving gesture.

"Jim is really quite right, doctor," she said seriously. "My husband has been making life unbearable for us, and we want to know whether, in your opinion, he has a reasonable chance of recovering his sanity soon. If not, I think he must be sent to a home, because the servants are all giving notice. Nurses' meals are such a nuisance!"

The doctor ruminated for a moment. He had complete belief in the patient's powers of recovery, but he knew the uncertainty of forecasts.

"This is very serious," he said at last, glancing from one face to another. "I am certain that the patient's mind will recover when he regains strength; but in the meantime his mind is preying on his body and holding it back. He needs force from outside, and I am sure his recovery would be more rapid among you than among strangers, although he will probably drain your vitality considerably; but how long it will take I cannot say."

"Well, in my opinion—" began Jim.

"Shut up!" said his sister sharply. "There's no reason we shouldn't keep him here, is there, mother? If it will help him, we can get new servants."

"It's all very well for you to talk about getting them, my dear," said her mother scornfully. "It isn't so easily done. Of course, it doesn't matter so

much to you, since Charley's coming back next month."

"The old boy's got his knife into Charley, too," put in Jim. "Says he's lifting the elbow. Jolly sort of mortuary he'll think this!"

The doctor rose.

"I think I had better go and see the patient," he suggested. "You must decide this for yourselves." He and Mrs. Lomax went out together.

At the sick man's door the nurse added her opinion to the discussion.

"He ought to be certified, sir," she said, a red spot glowing on each cheek bone. "The things he says about me, and the advice he gives me! I don't know that I can stay here."

The doctor entered, and Mrs. Lomax waited at the door. Lomax was awake, lying propped up against the pillows, his restless eyes roving from face to face.

"Doctor," he whispered, "I don't like to have that nurse in the same house with my daughter. She's a bad lot, I'm afraid."

"Nonsense!" said the doctor heartily.

Lomax looked up at him anxiously.

"Has your own trouble begun yet?" he asked earnestly.

The doctor did not look up from his examination.

"What trouble?" he asked indifferently.

"Your wife," Lomax whispered. "Has she many men friends?"

The doctor reddened angrily.

"My friend," he said shakily, "I trust my wife as implicitly as you trust yours."

"Mine!" replied Lomax, glancing toward the door with bitter amusement. "No one'll ever hurt her while my investments are sound. Can you hurt flint?"

The doctor said nothing, but he completed his examination with quick, irritable movements, and left the bedside without another word. Outside the door his self-control shook a little.

"I'm afraid I begin to agree with the nurse," he said hotly. "He ought to be certified. This is beyond reason!"

"I quite agree," murmured Mrs. Lomax icily.

Her eyes, meeting his gaze firmly, had the character of yellow flint; and for a moment the doctor hesitated, doubting. Then he remembered his wife, and his anger revived, as if Lomax had touched a raw wound.

V

THE sick man lay alone, longing for the sleep that would not come. His body had become strong enough to keep his mind working, and day and night that terrible machine ground out new horrors that his spirit lacked the courage to override. The clarity of the world around him was fearful, for he saw the soul of reality, the inescapable future, and it appalled him.

Hitherto his mental growth had been checked by his absorption in his work; and his ideals were still those of the fairy story—perfection of character and environment in which alone it could be possible to live happily ever after. Now that he saw lives entire, he found perfection nowhere. Every face was full of the sorrow that fills all lives as inevitably as bumps fill a cobbled street. Happiness, too, was inevitable; but his mind passed over it, searching for the horrors that he could not bear, as the tongue seeks always the aching nerve of a broken tooth.

Suddenly a new thought assailed him. What was his own future? If only he could see his face, he would know, for it would be written there.

There was no mirror within his reach; but on the opposite side of the room stood a pier glass. If he crawled to the other edge of the bed, he might be able to see his reflection. He shivered with fear. Suppose that he saw a life of horror awaiting him! How could he face life, knowing the worst that was in store for him?

No, he would not look; but even as he refused, he found himself wriggling nearer and nearer to the unholy knowledge. Again he hesitated, dreading the vision that he would see. Trembling, he raised his head. The glass was too far to the side.

Now he knew that he must see, that he could not live without knowing the fate that awaited him. If he leaned out of the bed—no, it was too high. He needed support.

He clutched a medicine bottle, and with it reached the floor and gained the extra prop that he needed. Inch by inch he lowered himself. His left hand was on the edge of the bed, his right on the bottle. Now he saw the sparse hair of his head reflected, and he drew back in terror.

He leaned out again. Around the bevel of the glass his face crept slowly—first his high forehead, then his staring, sunken eyes, then his gaunt, unfamiliar cheeks and weak mouth, the features of an old man. Even as he watched, the face seemed to melt and flow, and with a crack his nerve broke. He tried to draw back, but he was too far out of bed. With a cry of terror he flung the medicine bottle at the awful vision that he dared not see, and fell in a dead faint.

Lomax opened his eyes out of a sound sleep, and, seeing the doctor leaning over him, smiled feebly. A month had passed since the day when he had sought foreknowledge, and he had fought his way back from a bad relapse.

"How are we to-day?" asked the doctor genially, sitting down at the bedside.

Lomax smiled feebly.

"Less tired," he said drowsily. "Soon go back to work, doctor. Glad to have me off your hands, I expect."

"Very," agreed the doctor. "If only the sun would come out, you'd be well in no time. Cheer up! We may have some summer yet this year."

A finger tapped, the door was opened a crack, and an eye peered through.

"Can we come in, doctor?" asked a voice.

"Come in, Miss Lomax," he called. "Your father's awake."

She entered, beckoning to some one to follow her. He was a broad-shouldered, brown-faced young man with pleasant blue eyes and a weak chin.

"This is my *fiancé*, doctor," the girl explained. "I thought father might like to look him over again."

"How are you, my boy?" said Lomax, offering a frail hand.

The doctor glanced at Charley's face as he leaned over the invalid. He wondered if the young man's eyes had suffered from the tropical sun, or if their lusterlessness was due to looking too often on the flowing bowl. Lomax, however, seemed to see nothing wrong. This was very satisfactory. Whatever mental freak had caused his former worries, it had now passed away.

On the stairs the doctor found Mrs. Lomax waiting.

"Was he all right?" she asked eagerly. "Do you think we could get back that nice nurse that he had at first? He wouldn't be afraid of her now."

"I'm afraid not," he replied sadly. "She's dead. I heard of it by chance this morning."

"Dead?" repeated Mrs. Lomax agitatedly. "Oh, I'm so sorry! But I'm afraid this nurse will have to go. She's been quarreling with the housemaid."

The doctor climbed into his car and touched the self-starter into whining life. In his mind he was reviewing the speech that he must make to his young wife at lunch—a short sketch of the duty of wives and the consideration due to a husband's feelings. So busy was he with this idea that he did not notice the flaring newspaper placards on every street corner, proclaiming:

"War—war—war!"

Violin vs. Vamp—By Trent



The boy violinist registers unconcern
while the chorus girls "stop the
show" with curtain calls



Let's Talk It Over!

A public conference in which the editor repeats what the readers say. All are invited to hurl a brickbat or toss a bouquet



EW to the line, let the chips fall where they may," is the motto of this department. We want your frank opinion of *MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE*, and we don't care whom it hits.

We're putting out some live fiction and interest-compelling features—at least, we think they are all of that and more. The public must think so, too, judging from the steady rise in *MUNSEY* circulation figures. But we're not satisfied yet, and we are keeping one ear wide open for suggestions from readers.

Chicago, Ill.

I was very pleased with your November issue and its new headlines, and I wish to make a suggestion about your covers. I would have them brilliant, but dignified, for I believe the two qualities can be successfully combined.

I like also the idea of carrying some non-fiction each month. It gives a publication class, to my mind. All the big ones do it, and *MUNSEY*, with its big reputation, should not lag behind.

H. J.

Wilkesburg, Pa.

In answer to your editorial requesting that the public state its preference for the type of cover for a magazine like *MUNSEY*, I may say that I personally—and a number of my friends also—prefer covers that are either copies of well-known paintings or some other type suitable for framing.

I enjoy the covers of *The Literary Digest*, *Good Housekeeping*, *The Woman's Home Companion* and *The Woman's World*. Those four magazines show the type, or types, of cover that I prefer; i.e., covers that are of sufficient interest to be used afterward. I have

had framed many *Literary Digest* covers, both for my own home and for gifts. The covers of the other three magazines I have used on the nursery walls, also for scrapbooks for my little boy and gifts to other children.

Mrs. L. S.

Sutton, W. Va.

I notice in your December number the second half of a story called "Office Politics." Did it begin last month? Inclosed find "two-bits" for which please send me the copy containing the first installment; whenever it was, as I do not want to miss it.

J. W. C.

Unlike a newspaper, a back number of a good fiction magazine is never out of date. Pass on your old *MUNSEYS* to friends or charitable institutions after you have finished reading them. Many readers save their copies permanently. If you have missed any issue and cannot get it from your news dealer, we will send it immediately upon receipt of twenty-five cents in stamps.

West Philadelphia, Pa.

You ask what subjects for covers your readers prefer. This one prefers purely decorative treatment for first choice, and ultramodern impressionistic for second choice. But anything rather than the inane girl subjects. Why not something to make your magazine stand out on the news-stands, as *The Golden Book* and *Vanity Fair* do?

As for serials, I'm "ag'in' 'em." Why two half serials rather than one long story for an issue? In your November issue my favorite story is "The Little Finger of Fate." C. F.

Some monthly magazines refuse to publish serials, but *MUNSEY* serials have been commended so repeatedly

that a great many persons would be disappointed if we should adopt that policy. We'd like more readers to comment along that line.

Atchison, Kan.

I enjoy MUNSEY very much and have this to say regarding covers: there are innumerable periodicals featuring girls' heads, seasonable covers, *et cetera*. I for one breathe a sigh of relief at something different. Story illustrations on the cover give one an added interest in the story itself.

Your special articles are good. It is the variety which makes MUNSEY so interesting. I like the two-part serials also, but I wish we could get them twice a month.

Mrs. A. M. W.

New York City.

I have just finished "Spotlight" and, although I have been reading fiction for many years, I have yet to discover a more fascinating serial. Give Ellen Hogue and Jack Bechdolt a pat on the back for me. Why not make MUNSEY a weekly instead of a monthly?

R. A.

Buffalo, N. Y.

You ask for a vote on the stories published in MUNSEY, and as a short story writer and an active member of the National League of American Penwomen, I perhaps have the right to express an opinion.

I have been reading MUNSEY for thirty-five years, and I think the present form is the poorest ever. "Lady Tenderfoot," in your September number, is an example of the worst in people lying, cheating, drinking and passion. Just what is gained by putting these low impulses into the minds of the reading public?

We are all deadly tired of the "Tickfall" stories, but "A Fireside Rendezvous," in October, was very good. Give the people something fine to think about, not evil.

One thing I can say in favor of your magazine. It is a comfort to read a story continuously, not have to skip from page 4 to 98 and hunt for the next word among a lot of ads for tooth paste, razor blades, canned soup and the like.

Mrs. A. W. G.

It is helpful to receive frank criticism from one so discriminating as Mrs. G. However, we were amazed to be told that MUNSEY caters to "low impulses." If fiction is sincere, it must present a cross-section of life—and human nature is not as altruistic and passionless as many good people would like it to be.

Clearwater, Fla.

If I may have an illustration of a Tickfall story, please send me one that contains *Rev. Vinegar Atts*. He certainly is the liveliest figure in fiction that I know of. I am sure

that I must have seen this colored gentleman somewhere in my travels. More power to E. K. Means, the author. Other writers who tackle the town or plantation negro in their stories are only weak imitators of Tickfall. You ought to get Means to make up a story about these copy cats.

L. V. G.

Chicago, Ill.

I think it an excellent idea to ask readers for suggestions about your front covers. I have read MUNSEY for years, but of late have been wondering why it didn't get more "up-to-date" in its covers, for most people buy a magazine by the way it looks. At least, all new readers do.

You should have a modernistic type of cover, something in simple, striking, flat tones, something with dash. To my mind *Asia*, *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair* and *The Delineator* have the best looking covers on the market, because they are the only ones in step with the age.

Simplicity and swiftness and concentrated energy seem to be the keystones of our times, but pictorially most magazines are afraid to accept it.

I also like the idea of the new headlines in the last two issues.

J. C.

Riverside, N. J.

My taste for magazine covers leans toward the modern girl, special seasonal views and humorous sketches, such as frequently appear on the covers of *The Saturday Evening Post*.

Miss A. McC.

Montreal, Canada.

I enjoy reading "Bob Davis Recalls."

R. G. G.

Baltimore, Md.

I just read your editorial requesting readers to comment on the type of covers they prefer.

Cover designs should be in accord with the kind of material used inside. The cover is just as much an advertisement of the contents of a magazine as a label is of a piece of merchandise, and it should tally with the contents.

MUNSEY's cover should illustrate the leading story or article in each issue. Such illustrations would have dramatic interest and would attract persons who like that type of fiction.

F. L.

Paterson, N. J.

I thought you might be interested in knowing that an old reader thinks the stories of *Raymond Manner*, by Reginald Campbell, are just wonderful. Please give us at least one of the *Manner* stories in every issue.

J. J. H.

New York City.

I read your editorial in "Let's Talk It Over" and it made me want to tell you what sort of cover I like best. I prefer girl covers. They are so pretty and have such great attraction for the majority of people.

I like your magazine very much, although your special articles are rather long and your

poetry is sometimes too crowded. Otherwise it is delightful. D. H.

A free evening, a rainy day, and the new MUNSEY. Let the rest of the world go by. I am a student at Lehigh University and, by the grace of God and the dean, a senior.

Being a student of journalism, I place "B for Billygoat" at the head of my list of what I like best in your November issue, not for its literary excellence so much as for the fact that, in the beginning, it is very true to an experience of my own.

"Forty-three, Fifty-two" is an interesting tale, short and to the point. I do not like "The Pay Dreamer," because it seems utterly incredible.

I disagree with D. L. M., who criticized your front covers. There are enough pretty girls on magazines. In fact, a superfluity of them. Your type of story illustration cover on most of your recent issues is unusual, and it is the unusual that succeeds.

Perhaps blessings do come in disguise, for I made my first acquaintance with MUNSEY four years ago when I was nursing a broken leg. I haven't missed an issue since then.

J. J. R.

Meriden, Conn.

"The Greatest Football Game of All Time" is just the kind of stuff that live, red-blooded Americans eat up. I hope to tell you, I vote in favor of more. F. R. O'B.

Mr. Trevor's series of sports articles, of which the fourth appears in the next issue, has stirred up comment all over the country. Although Mr. Trevor is a recognized authority on sports, and his designation of "the greatest" this or that is based on sound judgment, no one pretends it is the final verdict. Many people agree with him, many do not.

"After all," asks Grantland Rice in the New York *Herald Tribune*, "who is there to say there is any 'greatest' in football?"

"Who from this list could name one end to stand above all the others: Hinkey, Shevlin, Hardwick, Oosterbaan, Muller?"

"Who could name one 'all-time greatest' among backfield stars that include Heston, Thorpe, Coy, Gipp, Grange, and Cagle?"

"Each star for his own day and his own season is at least the saner way of matching them up. And even that is often nothing but a guess."

Read Mr. Trevor's golf story next month, then tell us what you think of it.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Please note the inclosed clipping from the *Herald*. I think this sports writer is suffer-

ing from an acute case of "sour grapes" because he didn't think of the "greatest" series himself. F. X. M.

Philadelphia, Pa.

I have been reading your magazine for years and for the first time am offering an opinion on your publication because it seems to be growing so obviously better with each issue. In the November issue I like particularly "The Greatest Football Player of All Time." I devoured it with interest.

All the stories in November were good, except "B for Billygoat," the plot of which struck me as amateurish.

I am a woman, but would enjoy seeing some beautiful feminine heads for your cover designs just as much as any male subscriber with an eye for the artistic. What could be more decorative or easy to look at? I ask you.

Mrs. A. R.

Now *you* write a letter, telling the world what you think of this magazine. You can't hurt our feelings—we've been roasted by experts. And we'd be glad to get your letter. We give an artboard, the original drawing of a MUNSEY illustration, to the writer of each letter published. All you do is ask for it after seeing your letter in print.

READER'S BALLOT

Ballot Editor,
MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE,
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The stories I like best in your January issue are:

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2.

3.

4.

5.

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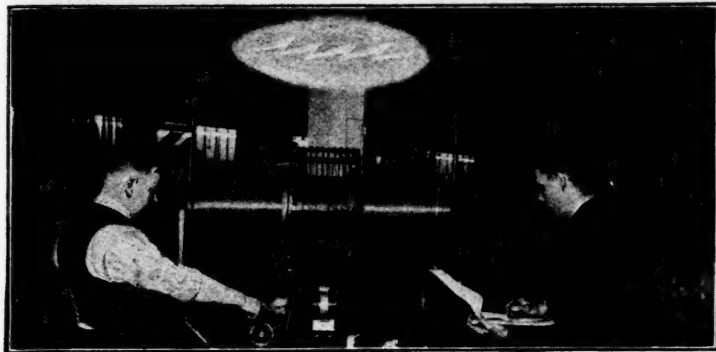
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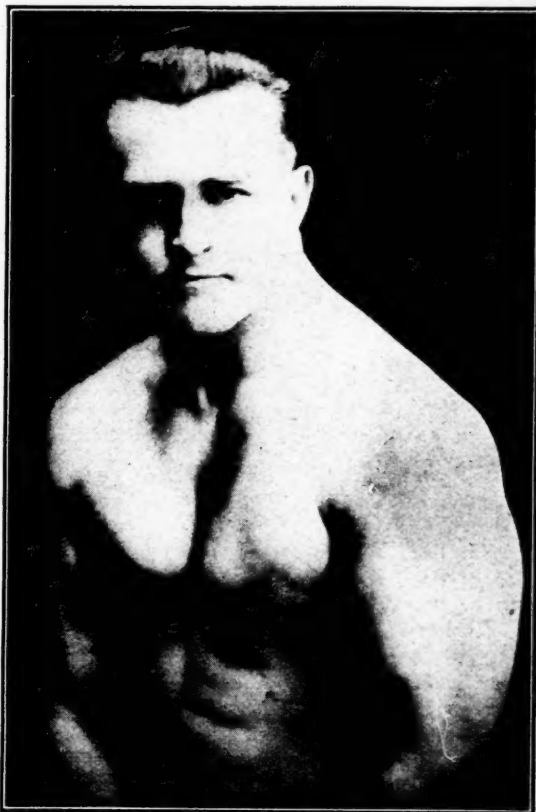
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AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

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Go Into The Crispette Business (candied popcorn). Make a lot of money. Adams reports \$364 profits in two days. Alexander \$3000 profits in four months. We start you. Write for facts. **LONG EAKINS, 1961 High St., Springfield, Ohio.**

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MONEY MADE IN MICHIGAN POTATOES. \$10 DOWN NOW AND EASY TERMS BUYS LAND NEAR MARKETS. Lakes, Streams. Write today. **SWIGART & CO., M-1276, First National Bank Building, Chicago.**

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SPARE TIME SALESMEN! NAME YOUR OWN PROFITS AND SELLING PRICES. SELL JAY ROSE ALL WOOL TAILORED-TO-MEASURE SUITS. No experience needed. Hand-some fabrics and patterns. Newest styles. Lowest prices. 100 latest SPRING SAMPLES FREE. Write **JAY ROSE CO., 404 S. Wells, Dept. A-1, Chicago, Ill.**

AMAZING NEW GLASS CLEANER offers you \$15 a day sure! Cleans windows, windshields, show cases, etc., without water, soap or chemicals. No muss. Easily demonstrated. Housewives, motorists, garages, stores, institutions buy on sight. Write for Special Introductory Offer. **JIFFY GLASS CLEANER CO., 2483 MONMOUTH, CINCINNATI, OHIO.**

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Sell Things Needed Daily in Every Home—Soap, toilet goods, remedies, food products. Lower prices. Higher profit. Better quality. Quick sales. No experience needed. Spare or full time satisfactory. **HO RO CO, 2702 Ho-Ro-Co Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.**

NEW INVENTION—400% PROFIT. LIQUID QUICK MEND FOR FABRICS AND HOSIERY. STOPS RUNS. EVERY WOMAN BUYS. HUNDRED OTHER FAST SELLERS. **J. E. JOHNSON CO., Dept. 5172, 6129 Wentworth Ave., Chicago.**

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WANTED. MEN—WOMEN. 18—55. TO QUALIFY FOR GOVERNMENT POSITIONS. \$95—\$250 MONTH. Permanent. Write, **INSTRUCTION BUREAU, Dept. 198, St. Louis, Mo.**

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MEN. GET FOREST RANGER JOB: \$125—\$200 MONTH AND HOPE FURNISHED: HUNT, FISH, TRAP. For details, write **NORTON INST., 1497 Temple Court, Denver, Colo.**

FIREMEN, BRAKEMEN, BAGGAGEMEN (WHITE OR COLORED). Sleeping Car, Train Porters (colored). \$150—\$250 monthly. Experience unnecessary. **836 RAILWAY BUREAU, East St. Louis, Ill.**

WOMEN MAKE \$9 DAILY WEARING AND SHOWING NEW INVENTION that prevents shoulder straps slipping. Real comfort at last! Free Sample Offer. **LINGERIE "V" CO., 16 Lake St., North Windham, Conn.**

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Tobacco Habit Cured or No Pay. Any form, cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chewing or snuff. Guaranteed. Harmless. Used by over 600,000 people. Full treatment sent on trial. Cost, \$1.50 if it cures; nothing if it fails. **Superba Co., N14, Baltimore, Md.**

Classified Advertising continued on page 6.

In answering any advertisement on this page it is desirable that you mention MURPHY'S MAGAZINE.

Have You the COURAGE To Take It?



This \$2,000,000.00 Guarantee of a JOB and RAISE?

Of course you'd like to earn \$50 or \$75 or \$100 a week—you'd like to do more interesting work—you'd like to get into a line that offers a real future—but do you know how to go about getting these things?



"Only one other man and I of six taking California State Board examination for Architect passed. Then I realized the thorough and practical training given by American School. In 18 months I have gone from tracer to Chief Draftsman, in charge of all architectural and engineering work in one of the oldest offices here." R. L. WALKER, Los Angeles, Cal.



"When I started American School training in the Spring of 1915 I was working 14 hours a night, seven nights a week for \$1.50 a night. That Fall I got a job in the Engineering Department of a large firm near here. Today I work 5 1/2 days a week and my salary is larger than I ever dreamed of when I began that course in Mechanical Drafting." R. H. S. E. A. V. A. S. S., South Bend, Ind.

If you have been thinking of "taking a course" but have held back because you were afraid you didn't have education enough to learn better-paid work—if you have hesitated to take the risk that it would actually land you in the better position and increase your salary—then here's the best news you ever heard in your life!

I want to tell you about DRAFTING, and show you that it offers you everything in pay and opportunity that you could hope for. I want to show you that a fine Drafting job is now easily within your reach. And I want to set before you an amazing plan which we have worked out with the co-operation of some of the biggest employers and engineers in America, to prepare you at home, in spare time, get you the job and raise your pay—absolutely without risk of a penny on your part.

Thousands of men—not a bit smarter than you, with no more schooling or experience have gone from poorly paid positions as clerks, mechanics, building trade workers and laborers into Drafting positions paying \$50.00 to \$100.00 a week, with our help. Now with a job and a raise waiting for you as soon as you are ready for it, all it takes is the COURAGE to go after it—now if you remain in the rut it's because you choose to, not because you have to.

Come Into DRAFTING!

I wish I had the room here to tell you all about DRAFTING—how it has become the most important branch of every kind of manufacturing and building construction work—how fascinating the work is—the fine bunch of fellows you'll work with—the big salaries paid—the wonderful chances for advancement. How, while Drafting is white-collar office work, it is hooked up closely with big projects and big men, and offers the thrill that goes with making plans which govern every move of the men who do the work. All this inside dope takes a 36 page book to describe and I'll be glad to send you a copy free when you mail the coupon for my no-risk job and raise plan.

O. C. MILLER, Director Extension Work.

THE AMERICAN SCHOOL

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To Show You How Interesting and Simple DRAFTING Is

Maybe you think Drafting is "over your head"—that it takes artistic talent or some ability you haven't got. In that case you have a pleasant surprise coming to you. For I'll be glad to send you the first three lessons from our home-training to show you that the drawing of plans is purely mechanical, easily learned and the most interesting kind of work you ever tackled. It takes little enough courage to look into this wonderful opportunity—just mail the coupon and see for yourself how you like Drafting and our guaranteed way to get into it.



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Dept. D-14, Drexel Ave. & 58th St.,
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Please send without cost or obligation 3 Drafting Lessons, 36 page book with the inside dope about Drafting and your no-risk plan and guarantee to prepare me, to place me, to raise my pay or no cost.

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City.....State.....
Age.....Occupation.....

Now You Can Have A New Skin--3 Days Blemishes Vanish!



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—and learn that what was considered impossible before the banishing of pimples, blackheads, freckles, large pores, tan, oily skin, wrinkles and other defects —can now be done by any person at home in 3 days' time, harmlessly and economically.

It is all explained in a new treatise called "BEAUTIFUL NEW SKIN IN 3 DAYS," which is being mailed absolutely free to readers of this magazine. So, worry no more over your humiliating skin and complexion or signs of aging. Simply send your name and address to MARVO BEAUTY LABORATORIES, Dept. 163-L, No. 1700 Broadway, New York, N. Y., and you will receive it by return mail, without charge or obligation. If pleased, tell your friends about it.

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In Railway Traffic Inspection
and they get as high as \$250 per month salary. We'll train you—and upon completion of your training—assist you to a position paying at least \$120 per month salary plus expenses, or refund your tuition. It only takes about 3 months of spare time home study and you're ready to step into a profitable position with rapid salary advances to \$175 and up. It's beautiful outdoor work with regular hours—away from dingy shops and monotonous desks.

Write today for free booklet—and contract showing how we assist you to a position after graduation or refund your tuition.

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Awarded Gold Medal

STUARTS' ADHESIF PLAPAO-PADS are entirely different from the truss—being mechanico-chemico applicators—made self-adhesive purposely to keep the muscle-tonic "PLAPAO" applied continuously to the affected parts, and to minimize painful friction and dangerous slipping. No straps, buckles or spring attachments. Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive. For almost a quarter of a century satisfied thousands report success. Awarded Gold Medal and Grand Prix. No delay from work. Process of recovery natural, so no subsequent use for a truss. Awarded Gold Medal, Grand Prix, etc. Trial of "PLAPAO" will be sent to you absolutely free. Write your name on coupon and send TODAY.

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A real home protector. Shoots six loud-powerful shots—like expensive automatic in appearance. Construction, finish, durability—use for fun or self defence. Frightens thieves, tramps, dogs—fool your friends. Guaranteed absolutely safe. Automatically loads magazine and ejects cartridges. Send no money. Pay on arrival \$1.99 100 cartridges given Free. Federal Mail Order Corp., 561 Broadway, N. Y. Dept. 5, S-1-4.
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Classified Advertising continued from page 4.

REAL ESTATE—RESORTS

CANADA TAX SALE—SEIZED AND SOLD FOR TAXES

\$ 64.80 buys 20 acres on main road
\$100.80 buys 2½ acres 800 feet lake front
\$189.00 buys 78 acres farm on river
\$279.00 buys 175 acres good hunting
\$360.00 buys 160 acres western farm
\$585.00 buys 300 acres, sporting—minerals

These properties, with several hundred others, are offered at the prices stated, no mortgage, no further payments. Beautifully situated hunting camps and fishing lodges where there is real hunting and fishing. Summer cottage sites; heavily wooded acres situated in Muskoka, Highlands of Ontario and the new North; also farms in old Ontario, Quebec, Prairie Provinces and British Columbia. Our 12th annual list just issued in the form of a 20 page illustrated booklet describes these properties and gives full particulars. It is mailed free on application. Now is the time to invest in Canada's minerals, forests and farms. Don't delay. These properties won't last long at these prices. Send no money, but send for booklet to-day so you will have first choice.

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INVENTORS: SEND DETAILS OF YOUR INVENTION OR PATENT AT ONCE, OR WRITE FOR INFORMATION. IN BUSINESS 30 YEARS. COMPLETE FACILITIES. REFERENCES. ADAM FISHER MFG. CO., 249 Enright, St. Louis, Mo.

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Learn auto —and tractor business by famous Ohio State Auto School methods: then step into job at \$50 to \$125 a week. Takes only 8 weeks. You learn on actual machines. Employment help given. Any man can learn. No experience or education necessary. **FREE BOOK**—Write today for big, free illustrated book, and free Radio Course offer. No obligation! OHIO STATE AUTO SCHOOL, Dept. 20-W, Cincinnati & Cleveland, O.



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deposit for each tire wanted—balance C.O.D. State whether clincher or straight side. You run absolutely no risk in buying from us. If for any reason the tires are not satisfactory upon delivery, return them to us for refund.

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SIZE TIRES TUBES

30x3	\$2.28	\$1.00
30x3 1/2	2.28	1.15
32x3 1/2	2.75	1.15
31x4	3.00	1.20
32x4	3.00	1.25
33x4	3.00	1.35
34x4	3.00	1.35
32x4 1/2	3.25	1.75
33x4 1/2	3.25	1.85
34x4 1/2	3.50	1.85
35x4 1/2	3.50	1.85
36x4 1/2	3.50	1.85
30x6	4.00	2.00
32x6	4.00	2.00
34x6	4.00	2.00

SIZE Used Balloon Tires

28x4.40	\$2.75	\$1.25
30x5.25	3.25	1.65
30x5.75	3.25	1.75
31x5.25	3.25	1.75
32x6.00	3.50	1.85
32x6.20	3.50	1.85

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Always worrying over money. Always skimping and economizing—going without the comfort and luxuries that every man DESERVES for his family and himself.



The Time Clock—a badge of hawk-like supervision and The Rut. A constant reminder that one is "just another name on the pay-roll."



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I Said "Good-bye" to It All After Reading This Amazing Book—Raised My Pay 700%!



Where Shall We Send Your Copy—FREE?

WHEN a man who has been struggling along at a low-pay job suddenly steps out and commences to earn real money—\$5,000, \$7,500 or \$10,000 a year—he usually gives his friends quite a shock. It's hard for them to believe he is the same man they used to know—but such things happen much more frequently than most people realize. Not only one, but HUNDREDS have altered the whole course of their lives after reading the amazing book illustrated at the right.

True, it is only a book—just seven ounces of paper and printers' ink—but it contains the most vivid and inspiring message that any ambitious man can read! It reveals facts and secrets that will open almost any man's eyes to things he has never even dreamed of!

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For example, R. B. Hansen, of Akron, Ohio, is just one case. Not long ago he was a foreman in the rubber-curing room of a big factory at a salary of \$160 a month. One day this remarkable volume, "Modern Salesmanship," fell into his hands. And from that day on, Mr. Hansen clearly saw the way to say "good-bye" forever to low pay, long hours, and tiresome routine! To-day he has reaped the rewards that this little volume placed within his reach. His

salary runs well into the 5-figure class—actually exceeding \$10,000 a year!

Another man, Wm. Shore of Neenach, California, was a cowboy when he sent for "Modern Salesmanship." Now he is a star salesman making as high as \$525 in a single week. O. D. Oliver of Norman, Oklahoma, read it and jumped from \$200 a month to over \$10,000 a year! C. V. Champion of Danville, Illinois, raised his salary to over \$10,000 a year and became President of his company in the bargain!

A Few Weeks—Then Bigger Pay

There was nothing "different" about any of these men when they started. None of them had any special advantages—although all of them realized that SALESMANSHIP offers bigger rewards than any other profession under the sun. But, like many other men, they subscribed to the foolish belief that successful salesmen are born with some sort of "magic gift." "Modern Salesmanship" showed them that nothing could be farther from the truth! Salesmanship is just like any other profession. It has certain fundamental rules and laws—laws that you can master as easily as you learned the alphabet.

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Free to Every Man

See for yourself WHY "Modern Salesmanship" has been the deciding factor in the careers of so many men who are now making \$10,000 a year. Learn for yourself the REAL TRUTH about the art of selling! You do not risk one penny nor incur the slightest obligation. And since it may mean the turning point of your whole career, it certainly is worth your time to fill out and clip the blank below. Send it now!

National Salesmen's Training Association

Dept. A-751, N. S. T. A. Bldg. CHICAGO, ILL.

National Salesmen's Training Assn., Dept. A-751, N. S. T. A. Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Without cost or obligation you may send me your free book, "Modern Salesmanship."

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

Age..... Occupation.....



To you... a very good night

WHEN the cold moon swings high, and the fire dies down, and a shiver creeps through the room—

Then quick!—to the gleaming tub, where waits a summery sea!

Slip into this genial warmth until it ripples gently about your chin. Loll in the golden haze . . . till the last impish chill has trickled away and the blood fairly sings.

Now, white as a billowy sail, comes *floating*—Ivory Soap. At

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10 minutes
ago—



How many people you know end their colds with Bayer Aspirin! How often you've heard of its quick relief of sore throat and tonsillitis. No wonder millions use it to conquer colds, neuralgia, rheumatism; and the aches and pains that go with them. The wonder is that anyone still worries through a winter without these tablets! Friends have told you Bayer Aspirin is marvelous; doctors have declared it has no effect on the heart. All drugstores.

ASPIRIN

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Quickly banishes all craving for tobacco. Write today for Free Book telling how to quickly Free yourself from the tobacco habit and our Money Back Guarantee.

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Statement of the ownership, management, etc., of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE, published monthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1928. Required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912.

State of NEW YORK) s. s.
County of NEW YORK)

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared C. T. Dixon, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publishers of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in Section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations. To wit:

That the names and addresses of the Publisher, Editor, Managing Editor and Business Manager are:

Publishers—THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Editor—R. H. TITHERINGTON, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Managing Editor—None.

Business Manager—C. T. DIXON, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

That the Owners are: (If a corporation give its name and the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of the total amount of stock.)

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

WILLIAM T. DEWART, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

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C. T. DIXON, Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1928.

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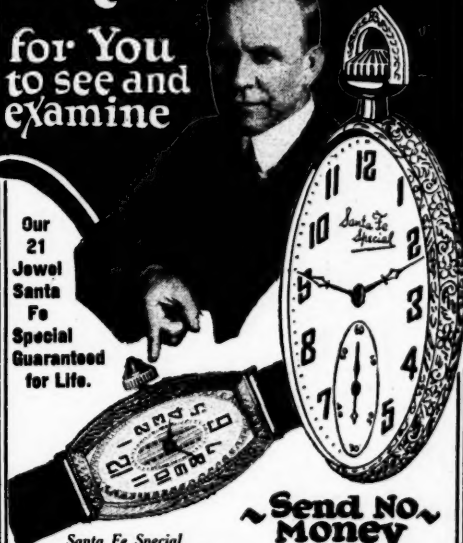
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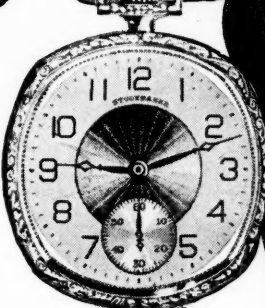

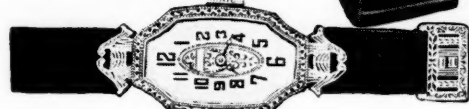
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